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The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics

By

WILLIAM ERNEST SMITH, PH.D.,
Professor of American History, Miami University

Illustrated

Volume I

The Blair family ranks next to the famous Adams family in its long period of influence on American public affairs. Francis Preston Blair, who entered politics in Kentucky about 1823, became one of the most conspicuous and influential of Andrew Jackson's supporters. From about 1845 onward the other two most prominent members of the family, Frank Blair and Montgomery Blair, played increasingly important parts. The Blairs joined the Free Soil party in 1848 and later were leaders in founding the Republican party.

Montgomery Blair, as Postmaster General under Lincoln, modernized the postal system, and Frank Blair was distinguished as a General in the Union Army. These Blairs had great influence with Lincoln and helped to determine the course of the Presidential campaigns of 1868 and 1872.

The biography of the Blairs becomes a running history of about fifty of the most eventful years in our political life. The story is told in a most interesting way, its quality as biography making the historical narrative thoroughly alive.

A very large portion of the work is based on material not hitherto available in print, free use being made of the Blair manuscripts which have previously been closed to historians.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
Publishers *New York*

THE FRANCIS PRESTON BLAIR FAMILY



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FRANCIS PRESTON BLAIR AND VIOLET GIST, HIS WIFE

Reprint from Columbia Historical Society "Records," xxi

The
FRANCIS PRESTON BLAIR FAMILY IN POLITICS

By
WILLIAM ERNEST SMITH, PH.D.
Professor of American History
Miami University

VOLUME I

8248

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1933

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Set up and printed.
Published May, 1933.

SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS
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TO MY WIFE

OPHIA D. SMITH

AND

WOODBURY BLAIR

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PREFACE

Francis Preston Blair and his two sons, Francis Preston and Montgomery, are representatives of a longer period of influence in American politics than any other family except the Adams family. Heretofore the Blair Papers have not been published, and are still in private ownership. I therefore hope there may be something in those which I have used in writing this biography of the Blairs that may afford pertinent information for those who are interested in the activities of the Blairs in private and public life, and at the same time assist students and historians whose interests are primarily in other related subjects.

As I have worked over a period of eight years in gathering material for this biography of the Blair family and in writing it, and have worked in an uncharted field, I realize that many imperfections may be found in this effort to place the Blairs in their environment. It has been difficult to be consistent in usage during the long period of time in which I have been forced to carry on my investigations. For any errors there may be in construction and statement of fact, I assume full responsibility. I deeply regret that the cost of publication has necessitated the elimination of two-thirds of my footnotes.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Gist and Woodbury Blair, who have made this work possible by placing the Blair Papers at my command, and who have contributed to the work with their suggestions and studies; and to Breckinridge Long and Christine Graham Long, a descendant of Francis P. Blair, Jr. To the late Professor Carl Russell Fish of the Department of History in the University of Wisconsin, I am deeply indebted for his encouragement and timely advice when I began to investigate this subject, and for his sympathetic interest in it throughout my years of investigation. Much of the work he read, and gave me his helpful criticism. I especially owe my wife an expression of gratitude for her constant sympathy and her assist-

ance in my researches. I owe my thanks to Dr. James L. Sellers of the Department of History in the University of Nebraska, and Dr. Frank H. Hodder of the Department of History in the University of Kansas, who have kindly read some of the chapters and made helpful suggestions. I am grateful to Professors John Rea, E. J. Howard, and Robert F. Almy of the Department of English at Miami University for their invaluable assistance in reading and correcting the manuscript. Professor E. L. King, Librarian of Miami University, has assisted me in various ways to procure information necessary to the completion of this work. I acknowledge my indebtedness also to Miss Stella M. Drumm of the Library of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, to Professor Floyd C. Shoemaker, Editor of the *Missouri Historical Review,* to Dr. Victor H. Paltsits of the Public Library of New York City, to the librarians of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, of the Library of Congress, of the Library of the State of New York at Albany, of the library of the University of Chicago, and to many others who have so kindly assisted me.

I wish to thank Helen Nicolay for her permission to use the Bates *Diary,* and to express my gratitude to C. B. Rollins of Columbia, Missouri, for the use of the James S. Rollins Papers. To Stephen I. Gilchrist, Miss Erma P. Dye, Blair Lee, John E. Reed, A. M. Stickles, and to many others I am indebted for help of various kinds. To my teacher, friend, and counselor, James W. Shannon, who assisted me with my first paper on the Blairs, I owe much.

To the many copyright holders who have permitted me to use desirable information, I extend my thanks and offer this acknowledgment as an indication of my appreciation.

WILLIAM E. SMITH.

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THE FRANCIS PRESTON BLAIR FAMILY

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

Spirits of the Early Frontier

All those, as far as we can learn, who proceeded from this school were men of sound orthodoxy, evangelical spirit, glowing zeal and in labors very abundant.—Dr. Archibald Alexander.

It would be a long story if one were to tell of the ancestors of the Blars or Blairs. They may be traced back to the days of turbulent feudalistic wars between England and Scotland. Among them are the Blairs of Ayrshire, of Balthyock in Perthshire, of Wigton, and of Renfrew. Documentary evidence indicates that one William de Blair lived in 1205 during the reign of William the Lion. One genealogist has traced the Belairs from France to Scotland and believed they originated in France. Those were days of royal fiefs, when nobles and ecclesiastics vied with each other for favors of the crown. The Blairs shared in some of those titles, and still point with pride to Blair Castle in Perthshire. They were of midland Scottish blood and temperament, "bonnie fichters," and rebels. A Bryce Blair was treacherously slain by the English one year before King Edward called his Model Parliament; another Bryce Blair of high lineage escaped with his wife and daughter (1625) in a coal sloop to Ireland. There he possessed himself of a farm of four hundred acres near Carrickfergus. The ruins of his old flax mill, one of the first in Ireland, are still discernible. The Blairs led the inhabitants of Derry in their struggle to hold the place against King James II, in 1689, until King William gave them relief. The grateful King freed Abraham Blair from taxation for life. Valiant Colonel Jamie Blair was there, and so was Lieutenant David Blair; the former died in New England in 1733. In the rebellion of 1798, Samuel Blair led the sons of "Hearts O' Steel."

Descendants of the Blairs still live in Ireland, where as Ulster-

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ites they staunchly oppose Home Rule. One of them wrote to an American relative in April, 1914: "The great Liberal Government are about to place us under a tyranny more galling than the tyranny of a victor, a tyranny which not only tortures the body but destroys the soul." If England would only "form a ring for us with her army and navy . . . we in the North of Ireland would soon settle accounts with the papists of the South and West. We would put down the Pope." [1]

The ancestors of Francis Preston Blair are traceable to the Bryce Blair who escaped from Scotland in the coal sloop. During the first half of the Eighteenth Century one of these Blairs by the name of Samuel, became the father of many sons and daughters: William, Samuel, John, and James—and Elizabeth, Esther, Martha, and Mary. These children were born in County Arenagh, Ireland, cousins to James Logan, who was Secretary to William Penn. Samuel Blair, the father, was probably of Ballyvallough. Six of the children emigrated to America. Just how and why they migrated to the New World is not definitely known.

Samuel and John Blair were mere boys when, accompanied by their sisters, they migrated to America. Like many of their fellow countrymen, they followed the main tide of Scotch-Irish migration to New York and Pennsylvania and sought their haven of prosperity in old Bucks County. They were natives of Ulster. Samuel, the elder, was born June 14, 1712, and John, in 1718. The causes for Scotch-Irish immigration were inherent in the conditions of their country. The hardy migrants could produce enough for subsistence only by the most exhausting labor. Their political outlook was anything but promising. Naturally, they turned to America to improve their social, economic, religious, and political conditions. They settled on the frontier, where they created buffer communities against the Indians and other foes. Their value to the United States may be overestimated in some instances, but nevertheless they have played no small part in the development of our country. Among the outstanding families of this race the Blairs have played a conspicuous part in our religious and political life.

[1] *Papers* of Blair Society. A. J. Blair to Mrs. Hiestand-Moore, Apr. 7, 1914.

The Blair children were welcomed into the home of the scholarly Dr. William Tennent. He was a product of Trinity College, an ordained deacon and priest, and a clergyman of the Episcopal Church of Ireland. Becoming dissatisfied with his home in Ireland, he came with his wife, Catherine Kennedy, to America to seek his fortune. Here he devoted his life to the ministry of the Presbyterian faith [2] and made his home among the sturdy frontiersmen of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, then the very heart of the Presbyterian settlements in America.

Four sons were born to William and Catherine, and the father labored diligently to bring them up in the pathway pleasing to his God. He answered the call of the Neshaminy flock and began his great work as pastor and teacher on Neshaminy Creek. There he found his neighbors without schools, and trying earnestly to bring civilization to the frontier. They needed education, religion, and many other things characteristically absent in a young community. The education of the Tennent boys was a serious problem for their father and mother. Dr. Tennent erected with his own hands and with neighborly assistance, a log hut, eighteen by twenty feet floor space, with which better to facilitate the education of his sons. A structure was built which was as crude and rough without as it was barren within. But the lack of equipment, the scanty room, and the roughness in appearance were overcome by the inspired soul of the master. His very being burned with vital religion, with an undying belief in the manifestations of the heart. His enthusiasm was contagious and his inspiration was imparted to his sons and pupils. Neighbors asked that their sons and daughters be admitted with Dr. Tennent's sons to the log schoolhouse. Their appeals were not made in vain, and so trudged to this little Presbyterian school Irish, Scotch, and Scotch-Irish boys and girls. The neighbors called it the "Log College," some in derision, others in reverence.

The Blairs were welcomed to the Log College when they came to old Bucks County. They studied the classics and theology; "and there they prayed and there they were taught of God." The instillation of the teacher's and minister's "spirit of piety" and

[2] Thomas Murphy, *The Presbytery of the Log College or The Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Philadelphia, 1889), 66-92.

zeal in the minds of this little group of coming ministers of the gospel set in motion a new movement that was thoroughly to "Americanize and Presbyterianize the Presbyterian Church in America."

The Log College was a center of radiation. Located on the Neshaminy in a spot of fertile soil, amongst the groves which shaded the banks of the winding creek, and eighteen miles north of Philadelphia, on the principal road running from New York to Philadelphia, it was suitably situated to be in touch with the outside world. Though the land was a wilderness when the Log College was built in 1727, it was rapidly filling with immigrants, and ministers were sorely needed to shepherd them. To the south were the churches of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and West Jersey; to the north were East Jersey, New York, Long Island, and scattering ones in New England; and to the west were Chester County and the Cumberland Valley. The field was in need of educated men whose hearts were tuned to the frontier life.[3]

The Blairs responded to the needs of community life. Samuel and John answered the call of the schoolmaster, the minister, and of the people. A sister, Elizabeth, could not preach, but she married the immigrant, Robert Smith of Ireland, who established a school at Pequea. She immortalized herself in her sons: the Reverend Samuel Stanhope Smith, first president of Hampden-Sidney College, and later president of Princeton College; and the Reverend John Blair Smith, who succeeded his brother as president of Hampden-Sidney College, and later became president of Union College, Schenectady, New York. Samuel Stanhope Smith married a daughter of Dr. Witherspoon. Other children of Elizabeth's family married Cabells and Breckinridges. Mary Blair, the daughter of Samuel Blair, married Reverend David Rice, who was familiarly known as the "Father of Presbyterianism in Kentucky." The Philadelphia presbytery licensed Samuel to preach in the fall of 1733, and he began his work in the parishes of Middletown and Shrewsbury, New Jersey. Six years later he went to New Londonderry, or Fagg's Manor.[4] No doubt John remained in school at the Log College, for he was not ready to be licensed

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Fagg's Manor was one of the reserved manors of William Penn. It was located in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and contained 39,250 acres of land.

until 1742, when he assumed the responsibility of a pastorate in the Cumberland Valley. Samuel, like his preceptor, Dr. Tennent at the Log College, soon established a seminary of learning at Fagg's Manor. To it came young aspirants who afterward became prominent ministers and politicians, as, for example, Samuel Davies, John Rodgers, and William Maclay. The master at Fagg's Manor was invincibly firm, intense in feeling, and a believer in instant manifestations of change of heart after the ordeal of baptism and acceptance of the Lord's Supper; he was an ardent laborer in his school and church. In these respects he was a true disciple of William Tennent. Samuel was eloquent; he could move thousands to tears,[5] or drive a synod to exasperation with his protests and denunciations. John was less eloquent than his brother; he was mild, patient, amiable, and did not indulge in bitterness and sarcasm. He was pious [6] and believed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, and Directory, but he was by no means a bigot. These brothers joined heartily and zealously in the movement to promote the theories of the "New Lights." They were radicals. John was "able and convincing," said Dr. Alexander; [7] but Samuel was referred to by Dr. Davies, president of Princeton, as "the incomparable Blair." [8]

The people whom the Blairs and Tennents served were largely recent immigrants or children of immigrants of German, Scotch, Irish, or Scottish-Irish blood. After 1713 the Germans made settlements along the Mohawk, where the region was known as the German flats, also up the Schoharie toward the headwaters of the Susquehanna, where they made a "connection with other groups which were working their way inland from Philadelphia." Two years after the raising of the Log College, Pennsylvania found the population of the huge Chester County sufficiently large to create Lancaster County out of its western end. The road to Lancaster, beginning with Philadelphia, became a crowded highway of immigrants. The Scotch-Irish who had found Ulster more unfa-

[5] Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Parts I and II, Philadelphia, 1839), II, 37-38.

[6] Alfred Nevin, *Encyclopedia of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1884).

[7] Murphy, 92-95.

[8] James Geddes Creaghead, *Scotch and Irish Seeds in American Soil* (Philadelphia, 1878), 292. Davies was president of Princeton, 1759-1761. See Hodge, 361.

vorable to an easy livelihood than they desired came in large numbers almost at the same time as the Germans. They found, as did the Germans, the eastern counties filled with people, and, consequently, moved westward, where they formed excellent buffer settlements against the dissatisfied Indians. The Irish were not to be outdone by the Scotch-Irish, and they, too, settled entire communities.[9] They soon spoke the language of the frontier. Titles to land were ignored as they pushed out into the wilderness. They made excellent political advocates of local freedom and unhesitatingly engaged the older eastern communities in a political battle for the control of colonial assemblies. The presbyteries which followed their trail, and which were established by the Blairs, the Tennents, and their co-religionists gave these new Americans opportunities for training in debate, self-government, and representative government.

The disciples of the master of the Log College saw a bountiful religious harvest in the frontier communities. To make it very successful they needed more ministers to exhort the wayward to a more vital religious life, and the attempt to supply these frontier preachers brought on a conflict between the Presbyterian churches of the New England type and those of the West. Before that conflict was at white heat, however, another movement was well under way. It was the Great Revival of 1740-1745. Some time after the revival, Samuel Blair said, in speaking of the religious conditions of the people in Pennsylvania before the revival:[10]

> I doubt not but there were some sincerely religious persons up and down; and there were, I believe, a considerable number in several congregations pretty exact, according to their education, in the observance of the external forms of religion, not only as to attendance upon public ordinances on the Sabbath, but also as to the practice of family worship, and perhaps secret prayer too; but with those things, the most part seemed to all appearance, to rest contented, and to satisfy their conscience with a dead formality in religion.

Agitations and religious excitement began about 1735 and continued with variations until 1739, when the Tennents, John Rowland, Samuel Blair, George Whitefield, and others began in

[9] Frederick Logan Paxson, *History of the American Frontier, 1763-1893* (Boston, 1924), 4.

[10] Hodge, II, 15.

earnest their crusade against the sinners and the devil. It was then when men saw the awfulness and the ungodliness of their sins and turned to the "blessed necessity of seeking relief by faith in Christ alone." Those convicted sinners had the hope that God would have mercy upon them. By 1739 and 1740 thousands of agitated minds and curious souls were following the fiery evangelists. Enormous crowds attended Samuel Blair's Sunday services, and "scarcely a sermon" was preached without "manifest evidence of a deep impression being made on the hearers." His eloquence, his fiery zeal, his abiding faith in his work, moved his audiences until "some would be overcome to fainting; others deeply sobbing, others crying aloud, while others would be weeping in silence. In some cases the exercises were attended by strange convulsive agitations of the body."

The "Great Awakening," as this religious movement is known, spread throughout the colonies and converts were gathered in by the tens of thousands. Whether the peculiar religious enthusiasm evidenced in mental agitations and convulsions of the body were in part the result of hysteria, or not, it was believed by those leaders in the movement of that day to be serious rational conviction of sinners to their dangerous condition. Blair preached upon the "miserable state of man by nature, on the way of recovery through Jesus Christ, on the nature and necessity of faith, warning his hearers not to depend upon their repentance, prayers, or reformation." They were not to seek peace in visions, dreams, and inspirations; they must have faith and an "understanding view and believing persuasion of the way of life, as revealed in the gospel, through the suretiship—obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ."

While the enthusiastic, young, and fiery zealots—young John the Baptists—were thundering the doctrines of the revived faith and the fear of God and the devil, they turned their condemning voices on the luckless ministers who were unable, or indisposed, to work up enthusiasm. The Blairs and the Tennents believed in the need of a general reconsecration. Ministers should revitalize their religion, and shrink in horror from the mere formality that had hidden the outpourings of the spirit. Therefore, Gilbert Tennent—intimate friend of the Blairs—persuaded the Philadelphia

Synod, which was established in 1717, to pass resolutions in the "name and fear of God" to "exhort and obtest all our presbyteries to take special care not to admit into sacred office" of the ministry, "loose, careless, and irreligious persons," and carefully to inquire into the experience of candidates in their "sanctifying grace in their hearts." The presbyteries were admonished to inquire yearly into the diligence, speech, and ministerial work of each of their ministers.[11] The synod carefully acceded to the wishes of Gilbert Tennent in the passage of these resolutions. But as Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Blair were not quieted with the formal passage of their proposed resolutions looking to reform in the profession, they prepared to make a blow at the New England, or conservative, type of Presbyterianism. They were fully convinced that young men were badly needed for the increasing numbers of congregations, and that it was unjust to the poor boys of the West to have to go to New England or to England to be educated and polished for the ministry. The Log College and Fagg's Manor could perform the function of educating them. The conservatives opposed the Log College process. To them, the learning to be had in the Log College with its piety and vital godliness as its reigning spirit was insufficient to turn out an efficient, finished minister. The New England Presbyterians maintained that each minister's congregation was his own, and quite safe from trespass by fellow workers. The Blairs and Tennents rode into adjacent territories at will and preached when they felt that those congregations needed the word of God. The conservatives opposed the idea of presbyteries having the right to ordain men to preach. The Log College school and Fagg's Manor maintained that presbyteries should judge when a man was fitted for ministerial work.[12]

The conflicting opinions came to a head when the two "New Lights," Samuel Blair and Gilbert Tennent, presented their protests before the Synod of Philadelphia in 1741. They accused the clergy of being unsound in believing that "there is no difference between the glory of God and our happiness; that self-love is the foundation of all obedience." The conservatives did not search the sinner's heart; their preaching was "soft and flattering," yes,

[11] Hodge, I, 240-41. [12] Murphy, 163-67; Hodge, II, ch. 5.

worse still, it was "powerless and unsavory." These assertions, for no proofs were offered, were made before a Synod, which, by the admission of the followers of each faction, had become a promiscuous audience, and they transformed it into a tumultuous crowd. Blair's accusations were milder than Tennent's, but he was younger in age than many of the members of the Synod in years of ministerial service. Consequently, his offence seemed to be doubly great. The protests were solemnly laid on the table, a minority marched up and signed them, and the dramatic silence was broken by cries of "gross lies before God"; and from the gallery came the angry cry of "cast them out." Then followed a rush to the roll of signers to ascertain who should go; that done, the minority withdrew, followed by its sympathizers. The schism was made, the church divided for nearly a generation by the conflict between the Westerners and Easterners.[13]

For seventeen years the schism was unhealed. The New Brunswick presbytery was formed; the Log College continued to function; and the Revival lasted until 1745 before it died away to come again in the early nineteenth century. Thus the first generation of the American Blairs, who were ancestors of the Francis Preston Blair family, set an example of liberality and crusading zeal for each succeeding generation. We shall see James Blair and his son as advocates of the relief laws in Kentucky; the elder Francis Preston Blair and his sons as crusaders in the organization of the Republican party, and Francis Preston Blair, junior, and Montgomery Blair ardent supporters of the Liberal Republican movement and reform in general in the 1870's.

John Blair, at the age of twenty-two years, was ordained to preach the faith of the "New Lights" in 1742. He began his pastoral work in the new churches of Middle Spring, Rocky Spring, and Big Spring, Cumberland County. Samuel Blair devoted his restless energies to preaching and teaching at Fagg's Manor until 1757, when he died, leaving his manuscripts to John to be published. John assumed the duties that his brother was forced to leave behind him.

Before Samuel died John labored with his people in the Cumberland Valley, played a serious hide-and-seek with the Indians,

[13] Hodge, II, ch. 5.

and made two expeditions into Virginia to organize congregations at Timber Ridge, New Providence, and New Monmouth, in Rockbridge County, and North Mountain in Augusta County.[14] Finally the incursions of the Indians in Cumberland County drove most of his flock to safer communities, and he was forced to give up his churches. For a time he seems to have been without a charge, but at the time of the death of Samuel he assumed responsibilities at Fagg's Manor. With a knowledge of theology and a scholarship which compared favorably with the best scholars of his age, he succeeded so well at Fagg's Manor that he was called to the chair of divinity at Princeton, 1766. Here he preached, taught theology, and acted as vice-president of Princeton. The trustees offered the presidency to Samuel, son of John's brother, but when it was learned that John Witherspoon would come from Scotland to be president, Samuel declined to accept the presidential office. The funds for the maintenance of the chair in theology were insufficient to pay John's salary, aside from the president's salary, and since Witherspoon could teach theology, John resigned, relinquished part of his salary to the institution, and became the pastor of Maidenhead and Kingston for a season. In May of 1769 he went to Walkkill (now Montgomery) in the highlands of New York to accept a pastorate in a Presbyterian church where he died on December 8, 1771.

John firmly believed that presbyterian form of government was the most scriptural and the most favorable to religion and happiness. He thought truth required little else but to be fairly stated and properly understood. He was an uncommonly patient, placid, cheerful, and benevolent man—too mild to indulge in bitterness or severity as did Samuel. "Those who could not relish the savour of his piety," says Dr. Alexander, "loved him as an amiable, and revered him as a great man." He left no fortune for his large family, but he had given them a religious education. While on his death-bed he begged his family to live Christian lives and died saying: "Directly, I am going to glory—my Master calls me, I must be gone."[15] Like his brother Samuel, he died a

[14] Henry Alexander White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders* (New York, 1911), 38-39.

[15] Archibald Alexander (ed.), *Biographical Sketches of the Founder, and Principal Alumni of the Log College* (Princeton, 1845), ch. 15.

comparatively young man, and left religious tracts for publication. He had published a Calvinistic treatise on the subject of regeneration and one bearing the title, "Terms of Admission to the Lord's Supper." Samuel and John passed from the stage, but they bequeathed their spirit to their sons.

CHAPTER II

Striking Roots in Kentucky

The American frontier was not founded upon any antecedent theory of imperial or domestic growth, but emerged with a form largely dictated by the status of its land, the life that the early settlers could not avoid living upon that land, and an inheritance of ideas that the residents possessed.—F. L. Paxson.

During the lifetime of John Blair the frontier expanded across and beyond the Appalachians. Two years after he organized Presbyterian congregations in Rockbridge and Augusta counties, Virginia, Christopher Gist went out to the Forks of the Ohio to survey a two hundred thousand acre land grant for the Ohio Land Company. George Washington's brother, Lawrence, was interested in lands to the west of the mountains as a speculative measure, and he with others chose Gist to go as an advance agent of the company. The stockade which Gist built at Will's Creek was named Fort Cumberland, and along the blazed trail, which Gist made for his company, came in a few years the Virginia speculators and Braddock's troops. The march of Braddock was a gain for the colonists. Ever on the watch for new and desirable farmsteads, the colonial troops made use of Braddock's road across the mountains to open the way to the valley of the Ohio.[1] Immigrants were advancing to the Forks of the Ohio before the Revolutionary War was begun at Lexington and Concord, and the hostile Indians on the right bank of the river deflected them into the region of Kentucky.[2] There they began another frontier life in which James Blair and his sons were to perform important parts.

Another stream of immigrants had gone up the Shenandoah and down the parallel valleys of the Appalachians, seeking homes behind the lowland counties of Virginia and the Carolinas. The

[1] Paxson, *op. cit.*, 17-19. [2] *Ibid.*, 89.

Germans and Scotch-Irish filled the river valleys and spread out on the Piedmont as far south as Georgia. By 1745 Staunton was the seat of Augusta County, and four years later North Carolina and Virginia extended their mutual boundary westward to the Holston. Then came the gradual emergence of seaboard plantations with the farmers on the frontier, and the further advance of the settlers to the Watauga. But the lure of the valley beyond drew them to the wilderness trail which Boone blazed in 1775, and they joined the oncoming easterners and passed through the Cumberland Gap where they hit the long trail to Kentucky. Some of them followed Robertson to the rich lands in the bend of the Cumberland, and others remained to join Sevier in forming the short-lived State of Franklin.[3] In the migratory movements southward were John Durbarrow and James, sons of John Blair of Fagg's Manor. They left Chester County and the sons of Samuel Blair, who remained to become "eastern," while they turned to Virginia and Kentucky.

John Durbarrow, upon the recommendation of President Witherspoon, became the principal of Washington Henry Academy in Virginia. Born at Fagg's Manor in 1759, he was ordained to preach in 1784, and preferring the ministry to teaching, he began preaching at Pole Green in Hanover County, the home county of Patrick Henry. There he found few great estates, few slaves, "no modishly dressed" aristocrats with "leisure for reading and the cultivation of manners becoming a gentleman," and no "county seats with pretension to architectural excellence." Men were living by the sweat of their brows and knew the "virtues of primitive society" while they embraced the principles of Calvin's theology, which by Blair's time was a little tempered by emotionalism and humane philosophy of the simple folk.[4] About 1792 he moved to Richmond, where he opened a classical school but continued to preach. He built up his church, and became an intimate friend of George Washington and John Marshall. His firmness and orthodoxy are illustrated in his refusal to marry unbaptized persons. If during the ceremony he learned that either of the couple was not baptized, he immediately stopped the ceremony

[3] *Ibid.*, ch. 3.
[4] Carl Lotis Becker, *The Eve of the Revolution* (New Haven, 1918), 67-68.

to perform that sacrament, and then he proceeded to make them husband and wife. He persisted in preaching the old-fashioned Presbyterianism and became known as one of the "Two Parsons" of Virginia.[5]

James, the son of John Blair, did not enter the ministry as his kinsmen had done before him. He was born at Fagg's Manor in 1762. After receiving the best education which the early frontier schools and a scholarly father could give him, he went to Princeton, read law, practiced in Virginia, entered the state legislative assembly as a member representing a western county, and became as active in the politics of his state as his location permitted. A James Blair, probably of Path Valley, had been a member of the Harrod band which founded Harrodsburg (1774), but he must not be confused with James, the son of John Blair of Fagg's Manor. James was one of twelve children born to Eliza Durbarrow, the daughter of an Englishman. His elder brother Samuel went to Lexington, Kentucky, at an early date and became a judge. Samuel's seven children were christened with the usual Blair names. These Blairs have been scattered over the whole of the United States. The states of Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania lead in numbers of the descendants of Samuel and John Blair. In the tax list for Johnson County, Kentucky, in 1925, there were eighty-six Blairs, some of them bearing the names of Frank, James, and Francis Preston.[6] The genealogical study of the Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky Blairs is indeed a complicated one. The absence of baptismal records of John's children born at Fagg's Manor, and of any kind of complete records elsewhere, leaves us ignorant of the names of all of his twelve children. It is certain that his sons William and James were educated at Princeton, although the records of the College of New Jersey and Princeton University do not show that James graduated there. One daughter was named Elizabeth and another Hannah, who married William Linn and became the mother of Reverend John Blair Linn. James made his home at Abingdon on the

[5] Nevin, *op. cit.;* George Baber, "The Blairs," in *The Register* of the Kentucky State Historical Society, XIV.

[6] Mitchell Hall, *Johnson County Kentucky* (2 vols., Louisville, 1928). See both volumes for Prestons and Blairs.

Holston. His son, Francis Preston, was born there on April 12, 1791.[7]

The law practice in the region of the Holston and the small pecuniary advantages as a member in the state assembly were insufficient inducements to keep James in Virginia. He sought better fields to the westward. He migrated over Boone's Wilderness Trail to Kentucky, where he passed a perfunctory examination which admitted him to the bar. Not unlike Benton, Clay, and the Marshalls, he purposed to win a reputation and a competence for his family. The new state of Vermont was admitted in 1791 and Kentucky joined the Union as the fifteenth state in 1792.[8] By 1796 James Blair was Attorney-General of the state of Kentucky, which office he held for over twenty years.[9]

While in Virginia he married Elizabeth Smith, one of the four daughters of Ann Preston Smith, who was a daughter of John Preston, a Virginia planter and the founder of the famous Preston family, the history of which has been traced back to 1165 and is probably as purely Anglo-Saxon as any old family in America.[10] One of Elizabeth's sons was Colonel John Smith, who married Chenoe Hart, who was probably the first white woman born in Kentucky. Two of Ann's daughters married Lewis Marshall and George Madison, and through these marriages the Blairs were related to the Marshall and Madison families.[11] James and Elizabeth named their eldest son Francis Preston, Preston being in memory of the child's maternal grandfather, and Francis was probably for Francis Preston, a soldier in the American Revolution. Margaret Preston, sister of Ann, married a Brown, and her son, James Brown, who was the first Secretary of State of Kentucky, and United States Senator from Louisiana, married the sister of Mrs. Henry Clay. Through this marriage some writers have claimed that Francis Preston Blair and Henry Clay were

[7] John Thomas Scharf, *History of Saint Louis City and County* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1883), 625; *Lamb's Biographical Dictionary of the United States* (Boston, 1900); Blair MSS. in the possession of Major Gist Blair, 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D. C., a "record" in the *Manuscripts*.

[8] Paxson, *op. cit.*, ch. 10.

[9] Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky* (2 vols., Covington, Kentucky, 1874), I, 508; Baber, *op. cit.*

[10] William Bowker Preston, *The Preston Genealogy* (Salt Lake City, 1900).

[11] Collins, *op. cit.*, I, 512.

kinsmen. James Brown was the grandfather of B. Gratz Brown, who was a cousin of Francis P. Blair, junior,[12] and played a prominent part in Missouri during and after the Civil War. Ann's sister, Letitia, married Colonel Robert Breckinridge and became the mother of John Breckinridge, thus drawing the Blairs and Breckinridges into relationship.[13] As James Blair was thus connected with the leading families in the new state, and was a lawyer, he was comfortably situated to take part in political affairs.

He built his house in the capital city of the state. It was a modest log structure which was later weather-boarded to improve its appearance and to protect the family in winter. The house was conveniently located in the suburbs of Frankfort and known as "Bill Point." James unfortunately lost one leg and was thus incapacitated for rough pioneer life. In spite of his great physical handicap, however, he never lost his bland manner and kindly nature.

Kentucky was a frontier community long after James Blair had established himself in its political life. In 1790 there was a population of 73,677, of which 12,430 were slaves, and ten years later the number had increased to 221,955 whites and 40,343 slaves. The first great trek to Kentucky (1774-1792) happened during the revolution and the readjustment period; it was a time when Virginia was unable to offer much protection. The movement was a wave of frontiersmen impelled by the "land-winning motive," and the participators looked for little other protection than that of their rifles. There in the wilderness they developed into a dauntless people, a people who asserted their independence of control except that of the written law. Their speech was rude and tended to exaggeration; their clothing, shelter and food crude, but usually ample for the life which they lived. These frontiersmen were sympathetic with their fellows, yet they were positive of their absolute equality. They were agreeable companions and neighbors who loved liberty. Not so well educated as even the second generation on the Atlantic coast, still they were acquainted with nature and possessed considerable self-control. In their first constitution they made no reference to an educational system. Suffrage was, however, granted to every male who

[12] Preston, *op. cit.*, ch. 14.

[13] *Ibid.*

had not been "disfranchised by conviction of crime." Isaac Shelby was chosen for their first governor. He was an able frontiersman from Maryland and had seen service at Kings Mountain and at Cowpens. He was in the midst of an anti-English-feeling people who hated England for two reasons: her fight to retain the colonies as a part of her Empire, and her retention of the Great Lakes ports after the treaty of 1783. They wanted the navigation of the Mississippi River down which they might send their land-locked products. Spain owned the mouth of the Mississippi and she was an ally of England. Consequently the land of Kentucky formed an excellent hotbed to tantalize Genet and Adet and to encourage Aaron Burr. With the victory at Fallen Timbers on the Maumee and the treaty with Spain in 1795 giving the right of deposit of goods in New Orleans, the allegiance of the Kentuckians to the Union grew to be unquestionable.[14] It is true they passed the "Kentucky Resolutions," which were largely struck off by the hand of Thomas Jefferson, but those resolutions were "only a caveat directed against the course of a party."[15] They hated absentee government, as did all American frontiersmen.[16] These men of the frontier had fought England for local government; pulled away from Virginia and entered the Union for the same principle of local autonomy; and, now, they saw the government of that Union usurping powers which they believed belonged to the states. In harmony with such political conceptions, and in opposition to the consolidationists, they pronounced the Constitution a compact. Democratic societies were organized as early as 1793 to follow Thomas Jefferson. These societies were friendly to France when the French Revolution became a factor in our own country. They contemned such high-sounding phrases as "To the Worshipful Mayor," "His Honor the Judge," and "The Honorable Member." They were units harmonious with Democratic societies in Philadelphia and New York. The Federalists claimed them to be "self-created" societies whose sole purpose was to tear down the government. But these societies were expressions of popular discontent with Federalist rule, and under the leadership of Jefferson they were crystallized into the

[14] Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, *Kentucky* (Boston, 1884), ch. 8, 9, 10.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Paxson, *op. cit.*, ch. 11.

Republican-Democratic party that placed its chief in the presidential chair in 1801.

James Blair, Attorney-General for Kentucky from 1796 to 1816, was not a silent participator in the movement for democracy. He was a state politician who fell in with the democratic principles of the frontier. It is not difficult to understand why his son, Francis Preston, grew up familiar with all the phrase, "political maneuvers," implies. Nor is it difficult to understand why the father and son wrote, in 1811, their defense of the right of a state to tax the United States Bank, and the right to break its contracts.[17] They believed they were laboring for the rights of the people and for the rights of the states. They were members of a debtor community which was struggling for self-expression against its creditors.

James accumulated a little property. He received a grant of one thousand acres of land on Licking Creek in Bourbon County in 1799, and one hundred and fifty-three acres in Christian County in 1807.[18] However, his salary was small, his practice not extensive, and he did not become wealthy. His important work was no less a task than to revise successfully the complicated land and criminal laws of Kentucky. Blair and Harry Toulmin were appointed in consequence of a legislative act in 1801-02 and completed the compilation in three volumes in 1804-05. He was twice married and was an elder in the church to which he was greatly attached.

His children were John Smith, the eldest; Francis Preston; Samuel Dubarrow, born January 6, 1794; William Preston Smith, born February 18, 1796; Susanna Trigg, born June 9, 1798; Louis Marshall, born July 28, 1801; and Eliza Jane, born March 15, 1804. Some of these children died in infancy. William became a captain in the United States army, Samuel became a judge in Florida, and John went to Missouri and became a farmer.

[17] Collins, *op. cit.*, I, 508; Francis Preston Blair (ed.), The *Globe*, July 25, 1843.
[18] Willard Rouse Jillson, *Kentucky Land Grants* (Louisville, 1924), 146, 262.

CHAPTER III

Francis Preston Blair Enters Politics

Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law.—Goldsmith.

James Blair sent young Francis Preston to Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky. There the young man wished to follow in the footsteps of his father by preparing himself to enter the legal profession, but an unfortunate deficiency in his vocal powers caused him to change his purpose. He distinguished himself as a student of rhetoric and as a linguist. Probably his physical deficiency and his talent for writing led him into the field of journalism, where he excelled during the thirties in editorial invectives. Although he studied law and was admitted to the bar, he never practiced.[1]

Blair graduated with honors at Transylvania in 1811. This little western school came into existence when Kentucky Academy and Transylvania Seminary were merged in 1798. Until eight years after Blair had graduated, it was no more than a grammar school. The course of study was limited; the number of pupils graduated, small; and its renown was limited to Kentucky.[2] But this first western university must not be disparaged. The spirit of the teachers and pupils and the thirst for knowledge produced a number of remarkable characters in American history.

Reverend James Blythe acted as president from 1804 to 1817. After 1817 he became professor of chemistry [3] and Dr. Holley of Boston became president. The moderately liberal-minded Blythe was a pioneer in the Presbyterian church of Kentucky. The Reverend Robert Bishop, founder of the study of sociology in Amer-

[1] Thomas M. Clay, "Two Years With Old Hickory," in *Atlantic Monthly,* LX (1887), 187-99.

[2] Charles Caldwell, *A Discourse on the Genius and Character of the Rev. Horace Holley, LL.D., Late President of Transylvania University* (Boston, 1828), 151-52, 180, 199-200, 207-11.

[3] Robert Peter, *Transylvania University, Its Origin, Rise, Decline, and Fall,* in the Filson Club *Publications,* XI, 87-91.

ica, was Blair's professor in moral philosophy, logic, criticism, and belles-lettres, while John Monroe took Henry Clay's place as professor of law in 1807. Clay had resigned, but was made a trustee of the university. When Blair graduated there were seventeen grammar students and thirty-six scientific students.

Dr. Horace Holley was a fine soul, a man of high ideals, and an efficient president of the institution. To him religion was the "love of God and man." When he became president on a salary of three thousand dollars a year he found one large and commodious college building and the assurance of an enrollment of two hundred students. The library was small, and there was no regular division of students into classes. He wrote, "everything is to be done, and so much the better, as nothing is to be reformed." One year before he became president, F. P. Blair, Jacob Swigert, and Thomas A. Marshall were admitted to the bar.[4]

Although there were but few professors and students in Transylvania University, the training which Blair received there proved to be fruitful. His Scottish ancestry, his thirst for knowledge, and his schooling in practical politics, supplemented by the careful tutelage of his father, formed a solid background for the character which he was to be. His health was too delicate in his early manhood to stand hardships. Consequently, when he volunteered to serve in the War of 1812 and went off to fight on the Canadian frontier, he was incapacitated for a soldier's life by a hemorrhage of his lungs. He could go no farther than to Vincennes. His uncle, the Governor of Kentucky, upon whose staff Blair was serving, was forced to leave him behind. Blair's disappointment at not being able to go on with the army was very great. Hoping to improve his health by outdoor life, Blair settled on a farm on Benson Creek, a little stream near Frankfort. Before this, however, he had formed definite political conclusions. He opposed the rechartering of the National Bank in 1811, and believed in the right of a state to instruct its representatives. He and his father, who was Attorney-General of Kentucky, prepared the argument to sustain the state law passed to expel the Bank from Kentucky through state taxation.[5]

[4] Lewis Franklin Johnson, *History of Franklin County Kentucky* (Frankfort, 1914), 64.

[5] Clay, *op. cit.*, 187-199; The *Globe*, July 25, 1843; N. Y. *Herald*, Oct. 19, 1876.

While a mere boy Francis Preston fell deeply in love with Eliza Violet Gist, the granddaughter of Christopher Gist of Revolutionary days, and the daughter of Colonel Nathaniel Gist of Kentucky. Nathaniel became a colonel of Virginian troops during the Revolution, and lost a brother at the battle of King's Mountain. He died at a ripe old age, leaving two sons, Henry Clay and Thomas Cecil, and five daughters. Sarah Gist married Jesse Bledsoe, who became a United States senator; one daughter married Benjamin Gratz of Lexington, Kentucky; another married Colonel Nathaniel Hart, a brother of Mrs. Henry Clay; and another married a Doctor Boswell. Violet's father opposed her contemplated marriage with young Blair on the ground that his health was too delicate to allow him to live a long, useful life. "You will be a widow in six months, Violet," cautioned her father. The young woman, undaunted by the probability of early widowhood, replied, "I would rather be Frank's widow than any other man's wife." [6] They were accordingly married in the governor's mansion.[7] Happily Colonel Gist proved to be a poor prophet in Blair's case. Frank was slight, with stooping shoulders, and had very strong indications of consumption; he showed few signs of the vigor and endurance which he later developed.[8] He improved his health and depleted his pocketbook while he lived on his farm on Benson Creek, as he was a poor farmer. It is true that he liked flowers, trees, and birds; and he liked to eat the vegetables which he grew with his own hands, and to drink milk from his own cows; but he was unable to make the farm pay. Born in the home of a politician, he had been reared in a veritable school of politics. His mind turned to that field, and it was there that he made his reputation after he had given up farming. Nevertheless, he retained his farm and slaves, thereby making farming his avocation until he founded the *Globe* in 1830.[9]

Blair took a keen interest in the discussion of all public questions. He possessed an analytical mind that penetrated the complicated political situations of his time and wielded the ignited

[6] Blair MSS., Bonsal Notes. [7] Baber, *op. cit.* [8] Blair MSS., Bonsal Notes.
[9] Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years' View or, A History of the Working of the American Government For Thirty Years, From 1820 To 1850* (2 vols., N. Y., 1858), I, 130.

logic of an earnest disputant. The political pot was boiling all about him. Kentucky incorporated her Bank of the Commonwealth in 1820. This was an attempt to relieve the debtors of the state. It was a "novelty in banking, an institution which sought as borrowers, not solvent persons of high credit, but embarrassed and perhaps insolvent debtors." The Supreme Court of the United States made its decision in the Green *vs.* Biddle case in 1821. The people of Kentucky were touched to the quick by that decision, for the men who occupied the affected lands were neighbors, voters, friends, or relatives. To oust an occupant after years of hard labor was to make him an object of pity. His neighbors did not hold him responsible for the carelessness over titles by squatters and of the state of Virginia. The Kentucky legislature was responsive to the occupiers, and the state refused to be controlled by the decision of the Supreme Court. State-rights men who had voted for the Kentucky Resolutions in 1798 still lived and believed in them. They championed what they thought to be truth, justice, and right.[10] Blair took his stand with the popular party, associating himself with Barry, Desha, Rowan, Kendall, and the relief party in general.

The relief faction gained a point when the state passed a law in 1821 abolishing imprisonment for debt. They resorted to stay laws, unstable banking laws, paper currency, and they attempted to bolster up those laws by electing a set of judges to the state court who would supplant the "Old Court" and render decisions in harmony with the laws passed by a relief legislature. Their senator, Richard M. Johnson, declared before the United States Senate, that each state must be the judge of its own honor and the keeper of its own conscience.

The Bank of the United States figured prominently in the relief movement. The contest between its supporters and the Blair-Kendall-Jackson party in the thirties led to its downfall. That Blair and Kendall, who were to become Jackson's right-hand men, became bitter antagonists of the Bank of the United States while they were in the midst of the Kentucky relief struggle is significant. They were to carry their hatred of the

[10] William Graham Sumner, *A History of Banking in the United States* (N. Y., 1896), 124-37.

institution with them when they went to Washington. It was during Kentucky's struggles over relief measures that they formed their judgments as to the value and danger of the Bank to constitutional democracy. They and the Desha-Barry men were not alone in their fight against the National Bank.

The Bank made itself unpopular by acting as a check to over-issuing of paper currency by local banks. It forced them to resume specie payments by importing gold and maintaining specie payments in the crisis of 1817. It refused to transact business with banks which had suspended and thus "created heavy pressure on the latter to resume." Many over-issued local banks could not resume, or if at all, they did so with great difficulty. The Bank had been almost as reckless in its first years of banking (1816-18) as the local institutions. Over-issuing called for a new president who could use drastic measures, and his immediate curtailment of issues forced many banks into bankruptcy, thus swelling the total failures in the panic of 1819. The dissatisfied local bankers passed the blame and let the pinched debtor feel the supposed heel of the bank higher up.[11]

Agricultural frontiers have always been debtor regions. Settlers favored the expansion of currency and demanded relief measures for the debtors.[12] "The typical family on the agricultural frontier was young, poor and ambitious." As a rule impelling forces to migration were poverty, ambition, and opportunity. Borrowed money was necessary to cover costs of land, transportation, and maintenance for two years or more. After the land had been laboriously made ready for the plow, the frontiersmen felt that they had paid for their land in labor and that they deserved relief from payments on their farms. Sympathy was lacking between an absentee creditor and the debtor. Their outlook was as different as their stations in life could make it. Whether it was a colonial government demanding the right to issue cheap paper money as legal tender from the British government, or a frontier state passing relief laws, the fundamental principle remained the same. Kentucky merely construed an old practice as necessary and legal when she passed her relief measures.

When the forty Kentucky banks which were chartered in

[11] Paxson, *op. cit.*, ch. 26.

[12] Turner, *op. cit.*, 137-40.

1818-19 were forced to the wall by the action of the national banking institution, the state discontinued those banks and incorporated the Bank of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Professor Frederick Turner has rightly described the Commonwealth bank as

> an institution without stock holders and under officers elected by the legislature and paid by the state. Its notes were assigned to the counties in proportion to the taxable property, to be loaned on mortgage securities to those who need them "for the purpose of paying his, her or their just debts," or to purchase products for exportation. The only real capital of the bank was a legislative appropriation of seven thousand dollars to buy the material and plates for printing notes.[13]

A replevin law was passed by the legislature to force acceptance of the notes of the Bank of the Commonwealth for payment of debts if the creditors refused to accept them. The occupiers of mortgaged lands were to be relieved by another law which provided that land could not be sold under execution to pay a debt unless it brought three-fourths of its value as appraised by a board of neighbors. Quite naturally these neighbors were usually debtors and were anxious to keep up values.[14] The idea of such a bank as the state established was to inflate the currency and raise prices until the indebted persons could discharge their debts. It was a paper money machine. The consequences of these attempts to legislate values were evident in 1822, when a specie dollar was worth $2.05 in the Bank of the Commonwealth notes.[15] Creditors could well afford to flee from their debtors and pray for a specie payment. The legislature forced the old Bank of Kentucky to accept the notes of the Commonwealth and thereby forced the notes of the former down to fifty cents on the dollar. That was the death-blow to the Bank of Kentucky.

The relief party declared that the Bank of the United States was the cause of their ruin. There were honest men who really thought that was true; others had to place the blame where it hurt them least. That the Bank was the cause of all economic troubles was strongly denied by state Senator Wickliffe of Kentucky in 1838. He maintained that the creation and repeal of the forty banks and the sacrifice of the old Bank of Kentucky to bolster up the forty and the Bank of the Commonwealth pros-

[13] Turner, *op. cit.*, 137-40. [14] *Ibid.* [15] Sumner, *op. cit.*, 124-37.

trated Kentucky. It was this outrage against the rights of contract and sacred honor of the legislators that did the evil. "No, sir, it was not the Bank of the United States but independent bank makers, property law makers, judge breakers, and paper money schemers that then ruled and ruined Kentucky." [16]

The judiciary of the state refused to recognize the validity of the stay laws. A collision between the courts and the debtor party was inevitable. It came rapidly to the fore in Justice Clark's decision in the case of Williams *vs.* Blair, in which Clark held that the endorsement act of 1820 was unconstitutional. The legislature ordered an inquiry into the decision. The House Committee appointed to make the investigation reported back that Clark had given a "decision in contravention of the laws of this commonwealth called the endorsement and replevin laws," and had grossly transcended his judicial authority and disregarded the constitutional powers of the legislature of Kentucky. Judge Clark was asked to appear to show cause why he should not be removed from office. Discontent for eight years was ready to burst into flame; the crisis in the relief drama was at hand.

The state legislature which met in 1823 drew up a long argumentative document against the right of the judiciary to pass on the constitutionality of laws and declared that the decisions rendered by the courts were ruinous in their practical effects to the good people of the commonwealth, and subversive of their dearest and most invaluable political rights. Kentucky would submit to no tyranny of the judiciary. The legislature wished to draw up a protest to be sent to Congress to prevent the annulment of any state law by the Supreme Court except by a two-thirds majority of the judges. The Kentucky Court of Appeals answered this protest by deciding in substance that bank notes of Kentucky were not money, and not acceptable for payment of a note. The legislature retorted that the judges must not scale debts for contracts in notes of the two state banks, and after another ruling of the court, that the court could not take judicial notice of the value of the notes of the Bank of the Commonwealth on any particular date. The contest between the legislature and the courts continued with growing warmth of feeling until it reached a seeming culmination in the passage of a law

[16] *Ibid.*

which stated that the judiciary had encroached upon the rights of the people and that the laws which had provided for the organization of the Court of Appeals were thenceforth repealed. The relief party then created a new court. Blair was chosen clerk of the new Court of Appeals. The old Court of Appeals insisted that the law was unconstitutional and refused to disband. The new court ordered the clerk of the old court, Achilles Sneed, to hand his records over to Blair. That he refused to do. The new court then fined him £10 for not complying with attachment of court, and sent Blair, with the sergeant of the court, and others deemed necessary to seize the records in Sneed's office.

Blair found himself in the midst of one of the most ticklish ordeals of his life. Sneed's office was locked and the window shutters fastened. Feeling that the law was with him, he pried off a shutter, entered through a window, and took the records which he found. Not all of them were in the office. It is possible that some of the records had been removed to the Bank of Kentucky to be made safe against seizure. Later Blair with his force seized more records, but never got all of them. As far as records show, Sneed did not pay the fine, and the old court held Blair in contempt for seizing the records, though it knew beforehand its decision would be of no avail. The grand jury indicted the new Court of Appeals from justice to tipstaff, for trespass upon Achilles Sneed's office. One of the new court judges, amidst the great excitement, carried a brace of pistols, even when he went to prayer meeting. Indictments by either side were common. The judges of the old court issued a protest. Blair answered the protest with a series of letters signed "Letters of Jefferson." His letters set forth the feelings of the relief party. He addressed the judges thus:[17]

> Gentlemen: You are engaged in a fearful contest. Your attempt to hold and exercise a portion of the judicial power of this Commonwealth is considered a direct and gross usurpation. . . .
>
> Those who do not think there can exist a wrong in this government which the people can not and ought not to correct, promptly declared

[17] Johnson, *op. cit.*, 71; Arndt M. Stickles, "The Critical Court Struggles in Kentucky (1819-1829)" (Bloomington, Indiana, 1923). A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Indiana in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Unpublished, 80-81, 82-83.—Published since I used the manuscript copy.

in favor of your removal from office. With them went the country, and from that moment to this, a large majority of the legislature has uniformly been in favor of your removal.

You do not resign but set the public voice at defiance. You rallied around you the power and influence of the state and national banks, of most of the lawyers, of the merchants, of the rich, of the non-residents and idle chatterers who infest our towns. You determined you commanded always more than one-third of the legislature and thus would conquer the people or sink the state. . . . It is my design in a series of letters to unmask you; to strip you of the gauze of sophistry which you have flung around you; to exhibit you in your true attitude as bold usurpers unsupported by a single argument drawn from the constitution or the principles of our government.

A war of vituperative pamphlets written by Blair and Kendall followed.[18] Both of them were honest in their convictions. Their hearts beat warmly for their debtor friends. Blair and Kendall were also in debt, and Blair stood security for his friends to the amount of several thousand dollars.[19]

In another letter to the Old Court judges, which Blair intended to be final, he refused to comply with their request that he resign as clerk of the New Court. His letter was compact in form, and he set forth the principles of relief in logical, masterly manner. It showed a comprehensive knowledge of the laws and constitution of Kentucky.

The legislature, according to his political philosophy, was the highest interpreter of the law. The court was a creature of it, and subject to its disposition. He held his office of clerk by an act of the general assembly and the governor of the state. "On the passage of this act in every stage of its progress," he told the old judges, "its constitutionality was discussed, and after the fullest investigation and maturest deliberation, was finally decided." Legislators were the representatives of the people in whom all sovereignty lies. Therefore an act of the legislature was valid until repealed by another legislative act, or by a legalized judiciary. It should ever be borne in mind that: "By the perpetual renovation of the General Assembly, the voice of the people is continually heard to direct the movements of the system which they have formed by their constitution—Their power is the im-

[18] Sumner, *op. cit.*, 124-37.

[19] The *Globe*, Oct. 2, 1833.

pulse which puts everything in motion." Where was the authority of a court to stop that change in their system, if the court was, after all, only the creation of the past legislature? Did the people not have the right to create new courts?

In concluding his remarks to the judges, he assured them that he had no desire to wound their feelings. "I regret," he said, "that this war should have been waged so long with poisoned arrows and savage feelings. I have no venom in my heart to supply such weapons, no malice to induce me to employ them; what I have said bluntly, is not intended wantonly, it is the result of a frank and fearless manner, and in the same sincere spirit I assure you that I wish you health and happiness and success in everything that is compatible with the interests of the country." [20]

The relief party in Kentucky was not alone. Other states were passing similar measures. Professor Turner well sums up the situation when he says: "The distress brought about by the panic of 1819, the popular antagonisms to the banks in general, and especially to the Bank of the United States, as 'engines of aristocracy,' oppressive to the common people, and the general discontent with the established order—produced a movement comparable to the populistic agitation" in recent American history.[21] The voice of the people was to be heard in the election of 1824, although it was not effective until 1828.

[20] Pamphlet entitled, "Answer of F. P. Blair to the order of Messrs. Boyle, Owsley and Mills," in Durrett *Papers* in the Library of the University of Chicago.

[21] Turner, *op. cit.*, 137-40.

CHAPTER IV

Political Crossroads

We ought to weigh well what we can only once decide.
—Publius Syrus.

The campaign of 1824 opened with five prominent aspirants to the office of President. They were Henry Clay, "the mill-boy of the slashes," and affectionately termed "Harry of the West"; Crawford of Georgia; young John C. Calhoun of South Carolina; John Q. Adams of New England; and Andrew Jackson of Tennessee, already known far and wide as the hero of New Orleans. Since about 1815 Clay had been watching the growing esteem of the Westerners for Jackson. He had seen his American System become a political question over which the fight became one of Democrats against Democrats. His system had gradually been adopted by New England as her factories had multiplied. The middle group of states had enthusiastically adopted the plan, but the South turned a cold shoulder to it. Southern antipathy for the system increased as the cotton planters came more and more into political leadership. This opposition was Clay's chief source of weakness and finally proved to be the factor which kept him from the presidency.

Clay earned his reputation by dint of long and useful service. He was fully entitled to recognition as one of the foremost political leaders. But there was growing up in the West a set of young men whose hearts beat for a hero of a different type from that of the statesman and politician. Jeffersonian democracy, so long in power, was growing more conservative as it became older. The new western democracy, which was to borrow the name of Jackson, was on the threshold of power. To stem the growing popularity of his antagonist from Tennessee, Clay, in the halls of Congress, hurled his anathema at General Jackson who had invaded

Florida and broken up the centers of danger in that region. "Beware how you give a fatal sanction, in this infant period of our republic, scarcely two score years old, to military insubordination. Remember that Greece had her Alexander, Rome her Cæsar, England her Cromwell, France her Bonaparte, and that if we would escape the rock on which they split we must avoid their errors." His request was denied him, and Clay went forth a politically weaker man. Frontiersmen saw themselves mirrored in the rough warrior and instinctively turned to him. Jackson's sun was rising in the West.[1]

The campaign was a sectional one without any clearly defined political issues and soon became intensely personal. Crawford lost popularity for two reasons: he was the selection of a Congressional caucus; and he fell an unfortunate victim to a stroke of paralysis. Calhoun soon saw his chances fading when his home state of South Carolina drifted toward Jackson. He played safe and won the vice-presidency. George Washington would have felt heart-sick could he have returned to see the extraordinary amount of electioneering that went on. The vote which was cast for the presidential aspirants in November was: Adams 84; Clay 37; Crawford 41; and Jackson 99. No candidate received a majority vote. The election went to the House of Representatives, where the representatives of each state cast a vote for one of the three men who had polled the highest number of votes. Clay was automatically out of the race and found himself in the dangerous position of king-maker.[2]

Kentucky had presented the name of Clay in 1822. Blair was a warm friend of Clay and hoped to see him elevated to the presidency.[3] Amos Kendall was a Clay man. He had tutored the Clay children and had received very kind treatment at the hands of both Mr. and Mrs. Clay.[4] Blair and Kendall were intimate friends, of like political views, and Blair soon joined Kendall as a

[1] Paxson, *op. cit.*, ch. 29.

[2] David Saville Muzzey, *The United States of America* (2 vols., New York, 1922), I, 331-32; Edward Stanwood, *A History of the Presidency From 1788 to 1897* (2 vols., Boston, 1898), ch. 11.

[3] The *Globe*, October 10, 1844; Francis Preston Blair, Sr., *Gen. Jackson and James Buchanan* (Washington, 1856). A pamphlet.

[4] *Niles' Weekly Register*, XL, 301; *Argus of Western America*, July 19, 1828. The *Argus* was published and edited by Amos Kendall and Francis Preston Blair at Frankfort, Kentucky; Carl Schurz, *Henry Clay* (2 vols., Boston, 1887), I, 346.

contributor to the editorial columns of the *Argus of Western America.* Clay and Blair welcomed each other to their respective homes. When George Wallace Jones entered Transylvania University in 1821 he stopped at Blair's home while passing through Frankfort on his way to Lexington. There Governor Ninian Edwards introduced him to William T. Barry and Henry Clay, the leading politician in the West.[5] George Wythe had been the Gamaliel to Henry Clay just as Spencer Roane had been to Thomas Ritchie of the *Richmond Enquirer,*[6] but in spite of mutual admiration and friendship Clay failed to be such for Blair. Their political views increasingly diverged after the rise of the New Court struggle. Clay supported the Old Court party, the Bank of the United States, and believed in sound financial policies. He advocated his American System, which included a protective tariff. Blair opposed the National Bank, strongly supported the New Court party, and believed in the laws which were passed for the relief of debtors. He was a strong advocate of the abolition of imprisonment for debt.[7] Clay represented the political ideas in the West which John Q. Adams represented in New England, while those of Blair and Kendall approximated the views of Jackson and the frontier.

The campaign of 1824 was embittered in Kentucky by the injection of the New Court *vs.* Old Court struggle and the Relief party in general. Although Blair was a member of the Relief party, he was anxious to see Clay elected President. He still believed that Clay best represented the interests of the West. When the vote in November for the presidency eliminated Clay as a possibility, Blair then probably hoped that Adams would be elected if Clay were to be chosen Secretary of State.[8] Clay was a Democrat, thought Blair, and he would execute the principles of Western democracy if he were placed in the secretarial chair. There was mutual admiration between them. Clay early recognized the talents of Blair. He found him with all the fires of an ardent temperament and manly traits.[9] Political opinions were ex-

[5] John Carl Parish, *George Wallace Jones* (Iowa City, 1912), 82-83.
[6] Charles Henry Ambler, *Thomas Ritchie, A Study in Virginia Politics* (Richmond, 1913), 23.
[7] The *Globe,* May 28, 1833; June 6, 1832; *passim,* 1831.
[8] The *Globe,* Oct. 12, 1844. A letter by Blair to Clay, Oct. 3, 1827.
[9] N. Y. *Herald,* Oct. 19, 1876.

changed in private correspondence and in complete confidence.[10] During the period of uncertainty as to who would be chosen President, Blair kept a stream of letters going to Clay at Washington.

Clay, in the thickest of the scramble in Washington, confidently wrote to Blair that he considered his relation to the three candidates to be singular and often very amusing. Sometimes he was tapped gently on the shoulder by a partisan of Jackson who would address him: "My dear sir, all my dependence is upon you. Don't disappoint us. You know our partiality was for you next to the hero; and how much we want a western President." An anxious friend of Crawford's, not to be outdone by the Jackson followers, would accost him, saying: "The hopes of the republican party are concentrated on you; for God's sake preserve it. If you had been returned instead of Mr. Crawford, every man of us would have supported you to the last hour." Then a friend of Mr. Adams with "tears in his eyes" would beg: "Sir, Mr. Adams has always had the greatest respect for you, and admiration for your talents. There is no station to which you are not equal. Most undoubtedly you were the second choice of New England; and I pray you to consider seriously whether the public good and your own future interests do not point most distinctly to the choice which you ought to make!" How could he withstand this disinterested homage and kindness? Those men who were approaching him were so courteous and affectionate that he was tempted to wish that he might have the power to accommodate each of them. He had, however, decided that the election lay between Adams and Jackson; he preferred the former for the sake of our American institutions. "Address a letter" to your representative, he begged Blair, "to strengthen him in his inclinations" to stand by Adams. No one save their mutual friend John J. Crittenden was to know the contents of this letter.[11]

What would Clay do? That was the question uppermost in the minds of partisans. Probably three New York deserters had kept his name from being presented to the House of Representatives, where he very likely would have been chosen President.

[10] The *Globe*, Mar. 16, 1841.
[11] The *Globe*, Oct. 10, 1844. Clay to Blair, Jan. 18, 1825.

John Bach McMaster asserts that Clay knew what he was going to do as soon as he left Kentucky for Washington. He would wield his influence for Adams. Dr. Mansfield says in his *Personal Memories* that Clay told Dr. Daniel Drake of Cincinnati that he would vote for Adams if it came to a contest between the two men. Nevertheless Tennessee tried to carry him to Jackson by giving a dinner at which were both Clay and Jackson. Then Clay and Jackson dined each other.[12] Mrs. Seaton observed that the candidates were very jocose with each other, and she related to her mother that "at Mr. Calhoun's ball last week I stood among the dancers with Mr. Adams, when Mr. Clay passed in high glee, laughing, and saying he was much in the way of the dancers; or rather, they were very troublesome to *him*. 'O,' says J. Q., 'that is very unkind, you who get out of everybody else's way, you know.' "[13] The friendliness of the candidates was a mere curtain. Behind it Clay felt the sting of partisan abuse. To Francis Brooke he wrote: "I am, and shall continue to be, assailed by all the abuse, which partizan zeal, malignity, and rivalry, can invent. I shall risk, without emotion, the effusions of malice, and remain unshaken in my purpose." He had interrogated his conscience as to what he ought to do, and that faithful guide told him to vote for Adams.[14] His determination to stick with Adams was reiterated in his letters to Blair.

Clay supported Adams because he thought him a better man for President than Jackson. Blair was positive that he did not want Adams unless his politics were shaped by Clay who, he thought, represented the West. Blair really preferred Clay to all the other candidates. Jackson he did not know, and feared his federalistic views. News from Washington in January indicated that Jackson would appoint Adams his premier, with a reversion of the presidency. Blair's feelings in the matter may be best expressed by quoting from his letter written to his representative in Congress, David White, January 19:[15]

[12] John Bach McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States* (8 vols., Boston, 1914 edition), V, 75-77; Mrs. Chapman Coleman, *The Life of John J. Crittenden* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1873), I, 66.

[13] William Winston Seaton, *A Biographical Sketch with Passing Notices of His Associates and Friends* (Boston, 1871), 172.

[14] Calvin Colton, *Private Correspondence of Henry Clay* (New York, 1856), 111. Clay to Francis Brooke, Jan. 28, 1825.

[15] The *Globe*, Oct. 12, 1844; *Argus*, July 19, 1828.

For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that, although Jackson is personally preferred to Adams by the people, (an inclination I feel in common with them), yet if it were known that Jackson would give such direction to the course of his administration, by his appointments or otherwise, as to foster Adams' future views in preference to Clay's there would be but one sentiment among the supporters of the latter in Kentucky. They would consider it as a desertion of the true Western interests, which they feel vitally connected with the great principles advocated by Mr. Clay, and which they conceive in a great measure depend for their consummation upon the success of his future exertions. If, therefore, it should be perceived that the tendency of General Jackson's measures as President would be to supplant Mr. Clay, by promoting the views of Adams, then I have no doubt that the voice of all those who are in favor of Mr. Clay would be, "If we are doomed to have Mr. Adams as President at some time, let us have him now; if he has General Jackson's preference, let the General himself make way for him. We should rather have him now at the expense of Jackson, than hereafter at the expense of Clay. But if Jackson gives earnest that he will throw his weight into the Western scale, then let us throw our weight to his."

The friends of Jackson saw that they could not persuade Clay to elect their man. They determined to ruin him politically. Kremer of the Pennsylvania delegation in the House of Representatives lent himself to party intrigue and, duped by rumor, he wrote an anonymous letter to the *Columbian Observer,* a newspaper published in Philadelphia, charging the friends of Clay and Adams of making a political trade. The bargain was to effect the election of Mr. Adams, who, in turn for the gracious aid of Clay, would appoint the latter his Secretary of State. The offer was presumed to have been made first to elect Jackson if he would promise to select Clay for his chief officer in his Cabinet,[16] but Jackson scorned the idea of making any promise. A marked copy of the *Columbian Observer* of January 28, 1825, was mailed to Clay. On the impulse of the moment and while in hot anger, Clay dashed off a card for the *National Intelligencer* which he published January 31. He pronounced the writer, whoever he was, a base and infamous calumniator, a dastard and a liar, and if he would dare reveal himself and avow his name he would hold him responsible for all the laws which governed and regu-

[16] McMaster, *op. cit.,* V, 77-78; *National Intelligencer,* Feb. 5, 1825.

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lated the conduct of men of honor.[17] Kremer answered that he was the author and held himself in readiness to prove the charge to the satisfaction of unprejudiced minds and that he was not afraid to cry aloud and spare not when the rights of the people were at stake. Now, Kremer was a mere "bustling member of the House from Pennsylvania, whose chief claims to notoriety were a leopard-skin overcoat and eccentric manners." For Henry Clay to meet him on the duelling field of Bladensburg was ridiculous. Clay was persuaded to control his anger, and he cooled sufficiently to demand only that a committee of investigation be appointed to trace out the whole affair. His plans for immediate action were interrupted by the election of Mr. Adams amidst hand clapping, cheers, and hisses from the gallery.[18]

Clay informed his old friend Brooke, February 4, that he wanted no office in the Cabinet. He did not know who would be included in the appointments to the Cabinet.[19] The friends of Clay and Adams got together, however, for a long interview. We would like to know just what was said, but Adams omits the details from his diary. The interview occurred several days before the election of Adams, and Clay made the bargain look plausible by announcing soon after the interview that he would support Adams. The latter defied public suspicion, and Clay refused to consider it. Whether Adams was politically injudicious in selecting Clay in the face of widespread suspicion is another matter. He certainly had good reasons for making the appointment. On the other hand, there was reason for questioning. The two men were largely opposites in character and tastes. The appointment gave the friends of Jackson a club and a cry. John Randolph scornfully denounced the alliance as one of the "Puritan and Black-leg" and Clay called him to answer in a duel in which neither of the duelists was injured. Andrew Jackson believed the bargain had been made. He was indignant at the supposed high-handed act and fearful for the future of his country. It was, to his mind, the most open, daring corruption that had ever shown itself under our government, and if not checked by the people, would lead to open and direct bribery in less than a generation.

[17] *National Intelligencer,* Feb. 1, 1825.
[18] McMaster, *op. cit.,* V, 78-81.
[19] Colton, *Correspondence,* 113-14. Clay to Francis Brooke, Feb. 4, 1825.

Andrew Jackson was ready to draw his political sword for a four-year battle and fight until he had overcome the Judas of the West who had sold himself for a secretaryship.

John Tyler thought the United States owed Clay a deep debt of gratitude for his course in electing Mr. Adams. Judge Storey did not have the slightest doubt of the perfect correctness of Clay's methods, and Chief Justice Marshall wrote of Kremer's charges that he had long since ceased to credit charges destitute of proof. John J. Crittenden had written to Clay a few days before the election that no such thing as "your support of Adams" even if "Jackson should be elected" can ever "displace you from the hold you *have* on the pride and affections of Kentucky. If Adams is elected, and you will accept a station in his cabinet, all will be quieted in a moment."

Clay had given his answer. It was Adams. Blair was at the crossroads. He decided to wait until the administration developed its policies, and so he anxiously awaited the President's inaugural address and his message to Congress.[20]

[20] The *Globe*, July 7, 1843.

CHAPTER V

Blair and Clay

To live in friendship is to have the same desires and the same aversions.—Sallust.

President Adams proclaimed in his inaugural address that "ten years of peace at home and abroad, have assuaged the animosities of political contention and blended into harmony the most discordant elements of public opinion." There remained one effort of magnanimity, one sacrifice of prejudice and passion, to be made by the individuals throughout the nation who had theretofore followed the standards of political party. It was that of discarding every remnant of rancor against each other. He believed the collisions of party spirit which originate in speculative opinions, or in different views, of administrative policy were transitory.[1]

The address was not enough evidence of the President's future policy to cause Blair to break friendly political relations with Clay and the administration. George N. Bibb, a close friend of Blair, had, however, turned against Clay before the inaugural address had been written. Amos Kendall still had kind wishes for Clay because he believed that the elevation of Clay meant a gain for the West.[2] Thomas Hart Benton wrote a solemn protest to his colleague, Senator Scott of Missouri, denying Senator Scott's moral power to bestow his vote on Adams. And then in the dignified manner of a Roman he asserted: "For nine years we have been closely connected in our political course; at length the connection is dissolved under circumstances which denounce our everlasting separation."[3] Ritchie of the Richmond *Enquirer* ac-

[1] James D. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, 1897-1912), II, 860-65.

[2] *Niles' Register*, L, 301.

[3] The *Globe*, June 26, 1844. Benton to Scott, Feb. 8, 1825.

cepted the Kremer story of the corrupt bargain, helped to lead the revolt in Virginia, and at once suspended friendly intercourse with Clay, who had so treacherously betrayed the South. Disappointed men, honest, sincere, and otherwise, were seeking a common standard-bearer and Jackson became the man when he launched his four-year campaign. This he did before the echo of Adams' inaugural plea had died away. "Less possessed of your confidence in advance than any of my predecessors, I am deeply conscious of the prospect that I shall stand more and oftener in need of your indulgence," he confessed as he pledged a "heart devoted to the welfare of its country" and an "unceasing application of all the faculties allotted" to him to his country's service.[4]

Blair did not avow his disappointment in the administration and cast his fortune with Jackson until the President delivered his first message to Congress. To Blair's mind Clay had failed to control Adams, and he saw the Federalists, New England, or the East, in power, with Clay acquiescing in, if not actually supporting, the hated aristocratic policies. Later, as editor of the Washington *Daily Globe,* he commented editorially on his break with Adams thus: "He [Blair] denounced the Adams Administration the moment it developed its policy. He brought Mr. Kendall's paper [the *Argus*] out against it, before Mr. Kendall himself was prepared for it, and had the honor of opening, and fighting to the end, that battle in Kentucky which was so gloriously won for the Democracy and Gen. Jackson." [5]

The New Court party won a majority in the legislature of Kentucky in the election of 1824.[6] The victory was won by the people who felt grieved at the pronouncement of unconstitutionality of the relief laws by the highest court in the state. The abolition of the Old Court and the creation of the New Court with a new set of judges led to the appointment of Blair as clerk of the New Court of Appeals. He expressed his views in the columns of Kendall's *Argus* and in a flood of pamphlets.

Clay's feelings were hurt when he saw Blair ally himself with the anti-Clay men. He could not believe that Blair was doing the best for his own political future. "Although I think you have

[4] Richardson, *op. cit.*, II, 865.
[5] The *Globe*, July 24, 1843.
[6] Paxson, *op. cit.*, 240.

recently erred in your adherence to party contrary to your own principles," he wrote to Blair December 16, 1825, "I beg you to be assured of my continued esteem." [7] In March, 1826, he wrote to Crittenden: "Give my respects to Blair, and tell him I mean to write to him soon, . . . not, however, on Kentucky politics." [8]

The center of rivalry and strife was in Frankfort where the state legislature wrangled over appointments, relief laws, and political supremacy. Amos Kendall and Blair were in the very midst of the hottest political combats. The former emerged as one of the three public printers to the legislature, defeating Clay's man, J. H. Holeman, and Blair was chosen a director to the Bank of the Commonwealth when John J. Crittenden was chosen president of that institution.[9] The Old Court refused to retire from the field when the reorganization act was passed to establish a New Court, and the judges warned the people that their constitution, yes, their very government was broken.[10] The lawyers of the state denounced the New Court and its partisans, thereby incurring the ill will of the *Argus* and its followers. The *National Intelligencer* took its fling at the situation in Kentucky and received a reply from the *Argus* to the effect that "the Intelligencer is not our hornbook, nor Gales and Seaton our teachers." [11] Little did Gales and Seaton think that an obscure contributor to the *Argus* would emerge as one of the nation's foremost editors to engage them in editorial battle and nearly cause their financial ruin. The refusal of the Old Court to disband caused the state to have two courts in session in the fall of 1825. Governor Desha offered a compromise through the appointment of men from both sides to the New Court if the legislature would sanction this action.[12] The legislature refused to follow the Governor's suggestion. Breckinridge introduced and broadcast a resolution in the legislature calling on the Governor to produce proof of his charges against the Bank of the United States.[13] To add to the general confusion, the state capitol burned for the second time in its history, leaving the distracted members of the legislature to hunt for a temporary home. They found one in the

[7] The *Globe*, Mar. 16, 1841. Clay to Blair, Dec. 16, 1825.
[8] Coleman, *op. cit.*, I, 64. Clay to J. J. Crittenden, Mar. 10, 1828.
[9] *Argus*, Jan. 5, 1825. [10] *National Intelligencer*, Apr. 28, 1825.
[11] *Ibid.*, May 10, 1825. [12] *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 1825. [13] *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 1825.

Methodist church, only to be again driven out of doors when that building burned.[14] The legislature finally adjourned without any compromise or adjustment, and amidst the excitement created by the discovery of arms in some of the public offices which were placed there presumably to resist by force the decrees of the Old Court.[15]

The Old Court party or anti-relief party launched a cheap paper entitled *The Spirit of '76* to counteract the influence of Kendall's and Blair's foundlings, the *Argus* and the *Patriot.* Neither the *Spirit of '76* nor the *Patriot* have any special claim to good journalism. They were purely creatures of the time, the frontier, and circumstance. The editors of the *Spirit of '76* branded the New Court faction as a junto which cared for no policy except one which fed upon the treasury and resulted in their personal aggrandizement. But Kendall, who was Amos Kendall? The mouthpiece of the New Court faction, the Goliath of the faction, declared the *Spirit of '76.* He was the man who had "precipitated this once happy and honorable country from her prosperity, to her degradation";[16] a man "when caught in one falsehood" would "tell another to get clear of the first, and when confronted in one argument, like Goldsmith's schoolmaster, can, 'although vanquished, argue still.'"[17] The *Patriot,* derisively nicknamed the *Pat Riot,* untruthfully declared that Blair, the clerk of the "Desha Moot Court," had reached his office through bargain and sale after he had distinguished himself as a slanderer of the constitutional judges.[18]

The New Court party was doomed to failure; it was based on unsound economic grounds. Its attempts at relief were merely those of frontier adjustments. How would its leaders, Blair, Kendall, Barry, and Desha, extricate themselves without being politically dead? The *Spirit of '76* assured its friends that Barry's fame was gone and his reputation lost.[19] Desha soon passed out of the political limelight. Kendall's New Court paper, the *Patriot,* lived only a few months. The *Spirit of '76* gloatingly announced the death of the *Pat Riot* and declared that it was an illegitimate child of illegitimate parents who avariciously sought offices. Was

[14] *Argus,* Dec. 14, 1825.
[15] *National Intelligencer,* Dec. 31, 1825.
[16] *Ibid.,* No. 6, 84; I, No. 4, 62.
[17] *Ibid.,* No. 9, 143.
[18] *Ibid.,* No. 6, 81.
[19] *Ibid.,* 63.

Blair doomed to sacrifice his political life on the battlefields of the Old Court and the New Court?

In the thickest of the fray Clay was writing the most cordial letters to Blair.[20]

In the state election in 1826 the Old Court party returned to power, and with its revival came the end of the relief régime. Blair's clerkship ended with the forced relinquishment of the court records. He gave it up reluctantly, turning his office into a small armory to defend the records of the court. Anathemas from the enemy descended on his head in torrents, and it appeared as if his political days, if not his life, were near an end. "But Blair had the logic of the situation on his side. He simply fell back on the law in the matter." The state legislature had created the New Court by law, and it had not been declared unconstitutional, nor had it been repealed. Blair, being the agent of that law, found it his duty to guard the records of the New Court until they were ordered released by statute. As clerk of the New Court it was his duty to obey the court created by the reorganization act. The Old Court party simply used poor judgment and overstepped the bounds of its authority. They would have seized the records by force when the House of Representatives voted, November, 1825, 58 to 37, for a resolution to repeal the reorganization act, had it not been for a few cool heads who still remained. "Speaker Robertson met Sergeant Taylor and his party on the way to Blair's office to seize the records, pursuant to the house resolution, and by timely intercession persuaded him to turn back. Robertson says 'had he gone on, he would probably have sealed with his blood, his fearless devotion to duty, and the consequences would have been much bloodshed at the capitol, and, not improbably, civil war throughout the state, then apparently trembling over the crater of a heaving volcano.'" It was a time when Blair was the central figure in one of the two outstanding dangerous episodes in the state. That civil war did not result is "a splendid tribute to the pioneer common sense that ultimately prevailed."[21]

The reorganization act had passed the House of Representatives in 1824 by a vote of 43 counties for it, and 28 counties against

[20] The *Globe*, Mar. 16, 1841.

[21] Stickles, *op. cit.*, 112-15.

it. Those who opposed it were largely landowners and professional and business men. There was a definite class cleavage and the Old Court party maintained that only debtors, backwoodsmen, the criminally inclined, and the poor in general were members of the New Court party. This was not true, however, as may be seen by the number of the votes cast, and the men who led the party. The New Court party had leaders in John Rowan, the most feared and perhaps most hated of all the men on his side; George Bibb; Solomon Sharp, a promising lawyer who was murdered during the struggles; William T. Barry, who later became Postmaster-General in Jackson's administration; Amos Kendall; Governor Desha; and Blair. The Old Court party had Humphrey Marshall, the Crittendens, Ben Hardin, Isaac Shelby, and others, at its head. It tried to persuade Adams, Jefferson, and Jackson to express their disapproval of the course of their opponents, but in each case the attempt failed. In 1826 it sent fifty-six members to the state House of Representatives and twenty-two to the Senate. In each branch of the legislature it had a majority which it used to deal a deathblow to the New Court and its adherents. Nevertheless, the New Court men contested every inch of the way. The bill to repeal the New Court finally passed 55 to 42 in the House and 22 to 16 in the Senate. Governor Desha returned the bill unsigned, but to no avail.[22] Blair quietly delivered the books, records, and papers in his custody to the Old Court, or to the Court of Appeals of Kentucky.[23] Professor Stickles, who has made the best detailed and careful study of this struggle, says that "while the verdict today has almost completely veered to one side of this struggle—a struggle unparalleled and, perhaps, the fiercest in an American state legislature over the respective powers and rights of the legislature and judiciary—the fact must not be overlooked that the fundamental questions involved were then debatable ones with two good sides." [24]

Another serious political complication which was to affect Blair's life for years to come developed in the investigations of the Adams-Clay bargain by the state Senate in Kentucky. Clay's friends unwittingly permitted, and really hankered after the in-

[22] *Ibid.*, 77, 85; 59-60; 93; 130-31.
[23] Collins, *op. cit.*, I, 23.
[24] Stickles, *op. cit.*, 82-83.

vestigation. Naturally it was pushed by the Jackson men. Blair was summoned to appear before the investigating committee to give any information about the bargain that he had in his possession. He refused to be sworn, offering a protest on the grounds of being Clay's friend and knowing nothing save that of a private nature which no gentleman should divulge. He was excused through the influence of John Pope of the state Senate. Did he refuse purposely to injure Clay? The friends of Clay looked upon him as a zealous promoter of Jackson's cause and a violent political enemy of the President. Furthermore, he was the bosom crony of Amos Kendall, who had turned against Clay. The enemies of Clay regarded Blair's silence as proof of Clay's guilt, that Blair was informed of the bargain and sale.[25] The least that can be said of the action of Clay's friends in bringing the matter up for public investigation is that such action was a great political blunder. It was made doubly so by the failure to notify Clay of the proceeding. He had good reason for asking Crittenden, some time after the investigation had been made, if it were not strange that no member of the court, nor any bystander, should have given him any account of his trial.[26] As to Blair's course, Clay seemed to have gloomy forebodings. "I perceive," he wrote Crittenden, "that Mr. Blair refused to be sworn. I persuade myself that his resolution was dictated by honor and his personal regard for me. Still, I feel that malice will draw from his silence stronger conclusions to my prejudice than could have been done if he had exhibited my letter. Should that appear to *you* and *him* to be the case, I should be glad that you would have the letter published." [27]

But Blair considered the correspondence between himself and Clay to be of a private nature. He refused to publish it. How Kendall came to see the letter of January 8 is not exactly clear. He published his charges against Clay in the *Argus* in 1827. Blair assured Clay that he had never authorized Kendall to use his name in the matter. Again, in 1844, Blair declared through the editorial columns of the Washington *Globe* that he had never authorized the use of any of Clay's letters which were in his posses-

[25] Coleman, *op. cit.*, 67-69; The *Globe*, Oct. 12, 1844; Kentucky *Reporter, A Supplement*, 1828. Bound in Kentucky Miscellaneous *Pamphlets*, II.
[26] Coleman, *op. cit.*, I, 66-67. Clay to Crittenden, Feb. 14, 1828.
[27] *Ibid.*

sion unless at the direction of Clay, and he emphatically asserted that he never suggested the attacks made on Clay by Kendall. Clay wrote to Blair in January, 1828, that he had no reason to be dissatisfied with Blair's course in the Kentucky Senate investigations and declared that Blair's conduct was manly and honorable. In answer to Kendall's threat and charges Clay wrote to Blair that he certainly would not consent to give his sanction to the violation of the confidence of private and friendly correspondence which would be produced by publishing the letters which have been interchanged between them.[28] The jab which Kendall had given Clay had angered him into silence, whereas a publication of his correspondence with Blair at that time might have considerably changed the course of his future political career. He did permit a committee to exhibit a copy of the corrupt-bargain letter to persons wishing to read it. Further than that he refused to go, and President Adams made note of his action in his diary that Kendall's "profligacy is the child of his poverty."[29]

Personal friendship could not withstand the constant strain of political differences. Clay and Blair were gradually estranged until they became the bitterest of political enemies. The real break came with the announcement of the policy to be pursued by the administration. That was in the President's message to Congress in 1825.[30] Political divergence widened with each step in the court struggles, and Kendall's charges brought matters to a head. The West was fast going Jacksonward and Blair joined the party which stood for his political ideals.

[28] The *Globe*, Oct. 12, 1844.

[29] Charles Francis Adams (ed.), *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1876), VIII, 28; Colton, *Correspondence*, 279.

[30] The *Globe*, Oct. 12, 1844.

CHAPTER VI

Creeds and Men of 1828

Resolved, that the Constitution of the United States ought to be amended as to vest the election of President and Vice President directly in the people, preserving the relative weight of the States.
—Argus, Sept. 23, 1829.

To the victors belong the spoils.—Marcy.

I

A little assembly of local citizens met in Frankfort in May, 1827, and gave expression to its political views in the declaration that "we will oppose, by all honorable means in our power, the re-election of *John Quincy Adams* to the Presidency of the United States." A special committee was appointed to coöperate with Jackson committees in Kentucky, Ohio, and other states. Blair was a member of that committee. Those men of frontier democracy advocated direct election of the President by the people and adopted a slogan of "Jackson and Reform." [1]

Blair forced the *Argus* to take its stand for Jackson, but it was not rabidly Jacksonian until it had defended Jackson in the Hall Court Case [2] and Kendall had assumed the responsibility for the conduct of the paper and had begun his attack on Clay in the fall of 1827. He claimed that he did not, in the beginning, believe Clay to be guilty of a corrupt agreement.[3] But when Jackson gave the name of James Buchanan of Pennsylvania as the man who had approached him in Clay's behalf in 1824, the *Argus* held that one of two things was very evident: either there were foul doings in the election, or Mr. Buchanan had foully slandered the friends of Mr. Clay. The editors of the *Argus* then began a campaign of bitter attacks on Clay and Adams, which was not to stop until they were established at Washington where they continued their

[1] *Argus*, May 23, 1827. [2] *Ibid.*, Mar. 14, 1827. [3] *Argus*, July 2, 1828.

denunciations of Clay and Adams through the columns of the *Globe*. The *Kentuckian,* Clay's paper, was certain that Kendall would be of no consequence if he were not the center of the Jackson faction. He "should be disrobed and exposed in his natural deformity and pristine nudity. . . . This fellow claims consequence, and prates principle." His principle was corruption. Why had he not informed the public of Clay's intrigues when he first knew of them? The impulse of virtue should have urged him to denounce Clay as an intriguer. People knew him as the man who wrote for the most pay. "Oh, Amos! Amos!! . . . Repent ye—Repent ye." [4] Kendall did not repent. The Jackson faction grew in strength and soon Clay's paper, the *Kentuckian,* was asking how there could be in Kentucky, men so degraded in their morals as to look up to Amos Kendall as their political apostle.[5]

About eight months before the *Kentuckian* was calling Kendall a reptile, scavenger, and dog, Blair had written to Clay in a wholesome strain. In his letter of October 3, 1827, he explained his motives for joining the ranks of the Jackson party, thus:

> My estrangement from you in politics has given rise to many unworthy conclusions with regard to my motives. Your friends, and some of your relations, seemed disposed to place the very worst construction on my conduct. They do me injustice. I have nothing to expect from General Jackson; and I know I never would have been disappointed in obtaining from your hands any personal benefit which I could have any right to expect from you. I think I have some proof of disinterestedness in adhering to a defeated party against a triumphant one, when I might have ushered myself into the latter under the passport of your imposing name, and the recommendation of having always supported one, to support whom is now its only avowed object. Indeed, I adhered to you while your principles and declared opinions militated directly against the most important pecuniary interests I ever had, or ever shall have at stake. And I never deserted your banner until the questions on which you and I so frequently differed in private discussion—(State rights, the Bank, the power of the Judiciary, &c.)—became the criterions to distinguish the parties, and had actually renewed, in their practical effects, the great divisions which marked the era of 1798. Whatever others may say, then, I hope you will do me the justice to believe that I am operated on by a sincere political faith, although you may consider it a delusion; and if you will not allow that the principles of Democracy sway me, you may charge

[4] The *Kentuckian,* July 31, 1828; Apr. 17, 1828. [5] *Ibid.,* May 8, 1828.

it to a sort of party instinct, in which reason has no part. My personal partialities have always led me towards you. My affections are still on your side, and if admiration of your genius had not been counteracted by the apprehensions that its powers are directed to destroy the political creed to which I had given my faith, I should have been proud always to have paid it my homage.

Clay quickly replied in an equally sincere manner:[6]

It was a circumstance of the deepest regret with me, that you found yourself obliged to adopt the course you have, in relation to general politics. I had scarcely a friend breathing with whom I could have differed with more pain. I have never myself imputed to you bad motives, or spoken harshly of you, on account of that course. If any of my friends or relatives have, they have done so, not only without my concurrence, but against my wishes. I know enough of the bitterness of political strife to be sensible that private friendships should never be sacrificed on account of any difference of opinion on public affairs, if it be possible to prevent the sacrifice. I have neither felt nor seen any necessity for such personal alienation in our case. As to the points of difference of opinion between us, it would be altogether useless here to enter into a discussion of them.

Matters did not go well for the administration at Washington. Sectional differences cropped out with increasing bitterness in debate in the halls of Congress. Three important events which took place during the four presidential years give a fair view of sectional interests. They are the Panama mission, which failed in everything except in bringing trouble upon the head of President Adams; difficulties with the Indians in Georgia which led that state virtually to nullify a law of the United States; and the "Tariff of Abominations" of 1828. These questions increased the break in the old Republican party and definitely divided it into a Jackson-Calhoun-Crawford wing and a Clay-Adams wing. The former adopted the doctrines of the Jeffersonian school in the matter of state rights. It appealed to the Southern planters in opposing the tariff and denounced monied interests for their close connection with national politics. Dangers to slavery in the extension of the power of the central government over territories were greatly emphasized. "The Democracy" became the watchword, and to be called a Democrat was to be recognized as a friend of

[6] The *Globe*, Mar. 16, 1841.

the common people. The Clay-Adams wing took the name of National Republicans. It stood for a broad view of nationalism.[7]

Mrs. Seaton wrote in March, 1827, that "party spirit is now fiery hot, and will increase every day. We have never been so much aware of it, not even in war and embargo times, as it has severed the most intimate links of friendship and goodwill."

When the President signed the tariff bill May 19, 1828, a storm of warnings, threats, and protests swept northward from the South. A South Carolina journalist wished to prepare for a secession from the Union; C. C. Pinckney cautioned New England to beware how she imitated the Old England; and Robert Hayne rejoiced for the South and its liberties that the regular army of the United States was a mere handful of men. Men like Monroe and Madison were alarmed at these disunionist sentiments and hastened to ask for moderation and compromise.

Jackson's friends everywhere assailed Adams, denouncing his administration for its part in the Conference of American Republics, protective tariff policy, internal improvements, and accused him of downright extravagance. They did not explain that Jackson had voted for a tariff and for internal improvements when he was a senator.[8] The *Kentuckian* accused the Lexington, Kentucky, *Gazette* of being conducted by a junto of knaves who had employed Kendall's old associate, Meriwether, to carry out their villainies in abusing and vilifying Clay.[9] The editor felt himself called to strike back at the *Gazette* with telling editorial blows and by so doing began another pen war in Kentucky. Blair and Kendall, in the office of the *Argus,* and Meriwether, editor of the *Gazette,* cross-fired at the editor of the *Kentuckian.* It is impossible to decide which articles were contributed to the *Argus* by Blair until about 1829. Both Blair and Kendall wrote scathing, denunciatory articles which caused their opponents to squirm and strike back.

The *Kentuckian* directly attacked Jackson. It quoted Jefferson's letter to Gilmore in which he wrote that one might as well make a sailor of a cook, or a soldier of a goose, as a president of Andrew Jackson; Benton was quoted as saying again that the first

[7] Muzzey, *op. cit.,* I, 335-45.
[8] Edward Stanwood, *History of Presidential Elections* (Boston, 1884), 97.
[9] The *Kentuckian,* May 15, 1828.

conspicuous act of Jackson's in Tennessee might be found at the race-track and the cock fight; Thomas Ritchie of the Richmond *Enquirer* was quoted as having exclaimed: "A gentleman who cannot interpret the plain expression of one law—and yet he would be called upon to administer all the laws of the land"; and John Randolph's letter of 1822 was brought forth to yield its phrase: "The people of the United States have not yet become so corrupted, as to choose a man of mere military talents to govern the national councils." [10] Then to make the sting smart more the editor set forth the charge that Jackson had offered a man by the name of Williams a commission in Aaron Burr's army, a charge which, it was declared, Jackson did not deny, and one which Williams asserted to be true.

Major Barry was running for governor on the Jackson ticket. He and Blair kept each other informed as to the best methods to use in the campaign. With Blair's aid Barry could speak through the *Argus*. The contest for the governorship was close. Bitter and venomous epithets were freely used by both parties. Every step in the campaign had to be carefully planned. "We are laying too much stress on the *Bargain,* and losing sight of important points," wrote Barry to Blair early in the year of 1828. The questions which should be emphasized were "the violation of the public will, the alarming doctrine of Safe Precedent, the dangers of cabinet succession, the aristocratic principle of J. Q. A., his apostasy, hypocracy &c. His conduct in the office he fills, his plunder of the public treasury &c." Then the subjects of "uniform republican principles of Gen'l J., his patriotism & devotion to the country, his great services & superior mind, the slanders heaped upon him, the attacks on Mrs. J., are all topics that should be discussed. They take well with the people." Articles should be written for the people to read. There was Blair's great opportunity. Speakers could only excite and awaken. Then, too, the Central Committee should coöperate with every county committee in distributing information. Barry could see that the other party had means with which to carry on the campaign, and was mortified at the contrast. He felt sure that Blair and a few other friends stood ready to do all in their power, but that men of wealth held off because

[10] *Ibid.,* June 19, 1828.

they valued money above liberty. He could not advise Blair what to do with the Jackson address, but he did want him to write and circulate a pamphlet against Adams, assailing him at all points and marking the contest distinctly between Adams and Jackson.[11]

The Jackson faction put forth every effort to carry Kentucky for their candidate. Clay's friends were working equally hard for Adams. Clay wrote to his old friend Brooke, September 24, 1827, that he believed Adams would be re-elected with ease.[12] By May 9, 1828, Barry was making a thorough campaign. Everywhere he found a damaging little story circulating. His letter which tells Blair about the story throws light on the pecuniary circumstances of Barry and Clay at the time. Clay's party was circulating the news that Barry was bankrupt and unable to meet an obligation of eight dollars. He complained and assured Blair that he was doing all that he could to meet his obligations. "My property is mortgaged, to the Bank & my securities who stand responsible at the Bank for me, not covered for purposes of fraud. . . . I have rented out my house, hired out my slaves, devoting the proceeds to meet my engagements, my family are at lodgeings of the plainest kind." And there was Clay. Look at him. "His mortgages, his responsibilities, his almost regal splendor, and yet he is Magnus Appollo of my calumniators."[13]

Blair could sympathize with Barry. He, too, was deeply obligated financially.[14] Barry was accused of double dealing with Clay in the corrupt bargain scandal, as was Blair. Barry wished to remain silent on that question. In reading the Blair-Barry letters the reader is left with the impression that the authors feared there was some truth in the charges against Clay and Adams.

Barry lost the election for the governorship by 709 votes in August, 1828. He explained the causes for his defeat in a letter to Blair thus: "Many *New Court Clay* men *opposed me*. The friends of the occupants opposed me. The lawyers, Judges & whole official corps opposed me. The Cabinet with all its powers through

[11] John Wilson Townsend, *Kentuckians in History and Literature* (New York, 1907), 71-86.
[12] Colton, *Correspondence*, 178.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Blair MSS., Benjamin Gratz to F. P. Blair, Sr., May 31, 1831; The *Globe*, Dec. 24, 1839.

the Premier opposed me. All this might have been met & overcome, but for the indolence, selfishness, & treachery of friends, against this no human foresight can guard." He felt certain that the monied powers disliked to have a poor man in office. Barry had stood at Thermopylæ and gloried in it, for the country would be "saved at Plateae where Jackson commands in person" (November election).[15] He was defeated, in debt, and had no office. An appointment from the successor to President Adams would be most welcome aid. It would be natural for him to ask for Blair should the powers at Washington need an editor after Adams had retired to Braintree.

The unusual interest aroused in the presidential campaign produced a heavy vote. Jackson won by a majority of 139,212 popular votes and piled up an electoral vote of 178 to 83 for Adams. By November 13, Clay had given up hope of carrying even Kentucky. As a private citizen he deeply deplored the result; as a public citizen he endeavored to unite in enjoining submission and resignation; and he hoped that he could find himself able to sustain with composure the shock of the event.[16] To his mind the military principle had triumphed, and triumphed in the person of one devoid of all the graces, elegances, and magnanimity of the accomplished men of the profession.[17] The Pittsburgh *Statesman* took the defeat more serenely. It would collect the scattered forces and grant that "the hurly burly's done—The battle's lost and won—Adams is 'obsolete,' and Jackson is 'paramount.'"[18] The *Kentuckian* could not look on the dreaded calamity in that light vein. The people had no doubt gone mad, and the editor hoped that they might not be cut off in their transgression.[19]

The people had won. They had a president-elect whose future policy was still unknown. The question at issue in the election had been rather who should conduct the government than what the incoming administration should do. Jackson was assured of the presidency, but what would he do about reform?

[15] *Ibid.;* The *Kentuckian,* Nov. 20, 1828.
[16] Colton, *Correspondence,* 210-11.
[17] *Ibid.,* 213. Clay to O. H. Niles, Nov. 25, 1828.
[18] The *Kentuckian,* Dec. 4, 1828.
[19] *Ibid.,* Nov. 13, 1828.

2

The election of Andrew Jackson (1828) ushered in a new epoch in American history. The voice of the West and the new labor vote turned the balance in favor of the man who fought men, not issues. He was the exponent of Western political democracy which stood for equality of economic opportunity and opposition to monopoly and special privilege.[20] Thomas Jefferson had revolted against government itself, but Andrew Jackson revolted at government by those whom he believed to be unfaithful and aristocratic. The masses raised him to the presidential chair; they possessed the power, and in them sovereignty rested; therefore, to the masses he held himself responsible. Therein lies his contribution to American political history: that government is responsible to the will of the people.

The best people were brushed aside. Clay, Adams, Secretarial Succession, Federalism, all wavered and fell before the political onslaught of the mob as it swooped down on the Capitol. The cheering partisan horde contended that any upstanding man was competent to hold office, and gave effect to the boast that to the victors belong the spoils. Seaton, of the *National Intelligencer,* after thirty-eight years had passed, still shuddered as he spoke of the election of 1828 as a triumph of demagoguism, ignorance, and radicalism in its worst form.[21] Mrs. Harrison Smith saw the respectably dressed, motley crowd which had gathered from far and near to see their President inaugurated, as a rabble of whites and blacks riding and running helter-skelter, trampling the lawn, ruining the carpets, and drinking punch at the President's House. Clay, with sunken cheeks and melancholic look, saw his opponent snatch his secretarial powers from him at the first sound of the cannon which announced that Jackson was President; and the people saw themselves victors, triumphant, and represented by the Peoples' President. Amos Kendall graphically wrote the news of the inaugural to the *Argus.* He, too, had joined the throng in its march to Washington. On April 8 the *Argus* announced

[20] Arthur Maier Schlesinger, *New Viewpoints In American History* (New York, 1922), 302.

[21] Seaton, *op. cit.,* 210.

that Kendall was Fourth Auditor of the Treasury of the United States.

Kendall sold his interest in the *Argus,*[22] but Blair continued to write editorials for it. On December 23, 1829, an editorial defending the Commonwealth Bank charged the enemies of the bank with wishing to destroy it because it was democratic, that it was a paying institution, and was in the way of the Bank of the United States. The latter, the article asserted, hoped to drive the Commonwealth Bank out of existence. The rich money-lenders, agents of the Bank of the United States, and the aristocrats, were working for the destruction of the local bank and for a recharter of the national institution.[23] A few days later Blair received a majority of the votes in the General Assembly which reëlected him president of the Commonwealth Bank. Two months later another editorial informed the readers of the *Argus* that the National Bank had drained the local banks of the country of their specie, refused to discount paper, and that "the oppression which this institution [United States Bank] is exercising over the community has become almost intolerable."[24] The pressure on the local banks struck a serious blow at those who were in debt, or had advanced security. Blair was using his name, with others, on notes for friends to exceed the amount of twenty thousand dollars. His financial condition was precarious regardless of the two offices which he held: namely, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Kentucky, and president of the Commonwealth Bank.[25]

While Blair was engaged in an offensive against the Bank, Cheves of South Carolina made his speech on the tariff in which he defended the position of his state. The *Argus* replied in an able editorial written by Blair that the tariff was heavy on the South and probably needed regulating, but that Congress had the constitutional right to levy a tariff, and that it was fortunate for the country that a man presided over its destiny, whose motto was "The Union must be preserved."[26] Blair unequivocally denounced McDuffie's designs. This was done before he knew that

[22] Sept. 23, 1829. [23] *Argus,* Dec. 23, 1829. [24] *Ibid.,* Mar. 3, 1830.
[25] William Lyon Mackenzie, *The Lives and Opinions of Benjamin Franklin Butler and Jesse Hoyt* (Boston, 1856), 87.
[26] *Argus,* Aug. 18, 1830.

Calhoun was a partner to McDuffie in their beliefs in nullification. The peace of the Union was threatened, and he rejoiced that a man of Jackson's stamp was at the helm to meet the nullifiers.[27]

The *Argus,* as an administration paper, came to the defense of Mrs. Eaton, the former Peggy O'Neil.[28] She was the wife of Major Eaton, Secretary of War, and close friend of the President; she had been snubbed by some of the wives of the cabinet members, by Mrs. Calhoun, and other ladies of the upper social circle. But the President needed help to defend Mrs. Eaton. Also, the scandal-mongers, and even friends, who rolled the name of Peggy Eaton on their tongues, had laughed and joked about Mrs. Jackson and her pipe.[29] Mrs. Jackson died a short time before Jackson was inaugurated. He firmly believed that she had been sent to a premature grave because of scandal circulated about her during the campaign. It was distressing to him to be drawn from the Hermitage where the grave of his dear Rachel was so newly made. On June 7, 1829, he wrote to Captain John Donelson that "could I but withdraw from the scenes that surround me, to the private walks of the Hermitage, how soon would I be found in the solitary shades of my garden, at the tomb of my Dr. [dear] wife, there to spend my days in silent sorrow." But he could not retire. The public had called him forth and he must perpetuate the blessings of liberty to his country and put down misrule.[30] He would not allow the wife of Eaton to be insulted and ostracised. The *Argus* called it a profligate persecution perpetrated to effect the objects of a set of heartless and malignant political conspirators. The editor of the Kentucky *Reporter,* Clay's firm defender in the West, ventured to suggest that Mrs. Eaton should retire to her own domestic circle where her few friends who knew her worth could associate with her, and not bring the standard of public morals down to shock the delicate sensibility of female society. The *Argus* informed the *Reporter* that it was the only organ in the West which had ventured "such vile insidious war-

[27] The *Globe,* Sept. 3, 1833.

[28] Peggy O'Neil had married a Mr. Timberlake who had later committed suicide.

[29] Claude G. Bowers, *The Party Battles of the Jackson Period* (Boston, 1922), 116-19.

[30] The *American Historical Magazine, op. cit.,* IV, 232-33.

fare upon that helpless sex, which cannot even contend against the ruffian attacks of public defamers." [31]

Thus the editorial staff of the *Argus* struck two tender chords in Jackson's heart. It hailed him as the savior of the Union against disruption through the principle of nullification, and it defended Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Eaton. The *Argus* was read by Van Buren. Kendall was one of Jackson's most astute politicians and a right-hand man; Major W. T. Barry, a party organization man, was called to Washington to become Postmaster-General and to help carry out Jackson's policy of removal of the government deposits in the Bank of the United States after McLean refused to do it and had been comfortably disposed of by making him a judge.[32] Blair had acted on the Central Committee in Kentucky for the Jackson Party during the campaign, and was a bosom friend of both Barry and Kendall. Clay was making his opposition felt. The Senate had rejected a galaxy of party editors whom Jackson had nominated to offices, only Kendall escaping by the aid of Vice-President Calhoun's deciding vote. A logical attack on Clay could be made by striking at him in his own state. Who knew Clay better than Kendall, Barry, and Blair? It was believed that Blair possessed the incriminating letters about the corrupt bargain. He was popular in his own state, despite his relations with the New Court party. He had defeated Clay's friends for the presidency of the Commonwealth Bank and for the office of Clerk of the Circuit Court. He was staunchly Jacksonian in political principles, able, and a state-rights man who valued the Constitution and the Union above all; he was a Democratic-Republican who would make a fitting character to defend Jackson if placed in the proper position. The questionable loyalty of Duff Green, editor of the *Telegraph,* to Jackson, required attention. An editor in whom absolute confidence could be placed was sorely needed to head a political organ which would be devoted to the interests of the party and the administration. He must become part and parcel of the Jackson régime.

[31] *Argus*, Oct. 20, 1830.

[32] McMaster, *op. cit.*, V, 527.

CHAPTER VII

Establishing the *Globe*

Speak and speak out and sow wisdom about.—Punch.

I

The *Globe* was brought into existence chiefly because of factional strife which existed between the friends of Van Buren and Calhoun. The Eaton Malaria, as Van Buren called the Eaton scandal, finally broke when the President reorganized his Cabinet. The veto of the Maysville Road bill warned Calhoun that his cherished political plank of internal improvements was eschewed by the President. It was a distinct triumph for Van Buren, who had counselled the President to veto the bill;[1] "it robbed Calhoun of a popular policy and weakened him so much that his enemies dared to proceed to destroy him utterly." Something was needed to complete the widening breach between Jackson and Calhoun. It existed in Calhoun's action in Monroe's Cabinet (1818) when he counselled the disciplining of General Jackson for his invasion of Florida. Major Lewis, a member of the Kitchen Cabinet and brother-in-law to Eaton, left no stone unturned in his attempt to set up Van Buren for Jackson's successor and to destroy Calhoun politically. Crawford, who still smarted from the sting of defeat, watched Calhoun jealously, and entered with alacrity into the scheme. Jackson was given possession of the information, which Calhoun had so long kept from him, through the intrigues of Lewis, Crawford, and James Hamilton. The angered President frigidly inquired of the Vice-President if he had opposed General Jackson's invasion of Florida. Calhoun attempted to explain his actions in that matter, but failed to satisfy Jackson. A correspondence between the two men was carried on through the summer

[1] John Spencer Bassett, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (2 vols., Garden City, New York, 1911), II, 22, 23.

of 1830. Jackson, still unconvinced of Calhoun's professed loyalty to him, summarily closed the correspondence and indirectly informed Calhoun that the President was through with him.[2] While this political storm was brewing the nullifiers brought the rising sentiments for dissolution of the Union to a head at a banquet which was held to celebrate Jefferson's birthday anniversary (April 13, 1830). Jackson attended the banquet, where he electrified the country with his toast: "Our Federal Union; It Must Be Preserved."[3]

Meanwhile Duff Green failed to satisfy Jackson with his conduct of the daily *Telegraph*. Green had left his paper in St. Louis in 1826 and had established the *Telegraph* in Washington, where he strongly supported the cause of Jackson during his campaign for the presidency. Green was rash, opinionated, devoted to Calhoun, and far from being amenable to militaristic discipline in politics. He had, in the eyes of many, overstepped the bounds of political propriety when he had tried to commit his party to Calhoun and Jackson by announcing them as the candidates on the Republican ticket.[4] He was, however, sufficiently in the good graces of Congress to be elected printer and to receive the job printing from the many departments. The *Telegraph* was recognized as the organ of the administration. After months of Jackson's administration had passed, many of those who were warm friends of Van Buren, or were opposed to Calhoun, turned their job work elsewhere and withheld information from Green. Green became entangled in the political situation at the capital and failed to attack Congress decisively when it opposed Jackson's nominations, or to defend Jackson. It must be remembered that Jackson hardly had a policy until he vetoed the Maysville Road bill, that he seldom called his Cabinet into his confidence and counsel, and that it was difficult for Green to determine just what was best to advocate as primarily important. Nevertheless, Jackson reproached Green for his negligence in not attacking Congress as a mere president-making body. As Van Buren's influence increased with the President, the *Telegraph* withheld more and more its support of the administration.[5]

[2] *Ibid.*, ch. 24.
[3] James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (3 vols., New York, 1860), III, 281-84.
[4] Jan. 17, 1828.
[5] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 479, 499, 512-13; Parton, *op. cit.*, III, 277-78.

Kendall explains in his *Autobiography* that Green had lost some of the supporters of Jackson even before the administration had been organized. He asserts that he was approached by Eaton, who suggested that Congress would probably elect Kendall as its printer if he was interested. Kendall rejected the thought of such a proposition unless it was sanctioned by Green; and, Green refused his approval. Jackson's supporters and the friends of Van Buren soon suspected Green of trying to turn the wrath of the rejected editors, whom Jackson had nominated for offices, against Van Buren. Kendall let it be known that if he were rejected for Fourth Auditor of the Treasury he would not return to Kentucky to edit the *Argus*. For some reason Kendall was elected by the casting vote of Calhoun. At this time the friends of Jackson decided that Green was eager to embarrass the administration, particularly Jackson's friends, and to promote Calhoun's interests. They thought they could not depend on Green for his unstinted support of Jackson's reëlection. Under these circumstances they justified themselves in seeking an editor of prominence and ability to establish a loyal organ.[6]

After Jackson's nomination of Kendall had been sanctioned by the Senate, Kendall wrote to Green that if he had been rejected he would have established a paper in Washington as the readiest way by which he could "provide the means of comfort for a destitute family, and vindicate the principles of equal rights, violated in the proscription of printers as a class." He had intended to devote his paper to the reform movement without any connection with Congress, and to uphold the democratic principles in which those who had elected Jackson believed. The *Telegraph* was not to have been antagonized, nor interfered with in its work. Kendall believed that his new paper could have promoted Green's ultimate interest, lessened the opposition to Green, allayed jealousy and envy, and prevented the avaricious editors from entering into competition with the *Telegraph*.[7]

Kendall corresponded with Blair about plans for a new paper. Just what passed between the two men concerning the subject is unknown. Evidence seems to show that Blair was unfamiliar

[6] Amos Kendall, *Autobiography* (Boston, 1872), 370-74.
[7] *National Intelligencer*, Mar. 28, 1831. Kendall to Duff Green, Nov. 7, 1830.

with the inside story of the political intrigues at Washington. Barry kept him informed to some extent. If Blair did know about Green's course, he used strategy to keep Green quiet until he could get a paper established. On October 13, 1830, he inquired of Green as to the feasibility of setting up an associate press in Washington to take care of the increasing volume of business and to ward off the enemies of the *Telegraph,* for, he wrote:

> I have seen that it is difficult even to prevent a portion of the public business from falling into the hands of these at Washington whom I consider public enemies, and to whom it could but give strength to wield against the Government.
>
> In this state of things I have supposed it might be advantageous to you individually as well as to the interests of the great cause, which you have so ably served, that another Jackson press should be established at Washington, under the management of one who would prove rather a coadjutor than a competitor. . . .
>
> I have had earnest, in the flattering place which many of the articles of the *Argus* have obtained in the *Telegraph,* that we could not divide in our efforts on any great public principle. The vigorous support which you have given the Administration demands my highest respect. Upon the tariff there are some indications of division among our friends, yet, I think, we should not differ. I have somewhat of southern feeling, and am desirous to modify the policy in relation to this distressing question, and accommodate it, in a spirit of compromise, to produce universal coherence in the democratic ranks throughout the Union. I cannot adopt the doctrine of nullification. . . .
>
> Let me ask the favor of you to answer this letter as soon as you can conveniently. I would have you consider it confidential, unless you should choose to confer with Mr. Kendall upon the policy of the views I entertain. I would not have any other person know that I have thought of changing my position.

Blair sent the letter which he had written to Green to Kendall, who was directed to deliver or withhold it as he saw fit. Kendall chose to send the letter with one of his own to Green. He assured Green that Blair had no other than friendly feelings toward him, and that Blair would not take a step which would injure the *Telegraph.* Fear was expressed that Green could not be reëlected as printer to Congress without the strenuous efforts of the President in Green's behalf. Then Kendall cautioned Green to consider the fact that the enemies were numerous. Many friends de-

sired another press to help defend the administration against the torrents of misrepresentation by its enemies. Many were meditating upon the means of establishing a press in Washington, some of them being Green's enemies. Now, wrote Kendall,

> should Mr. Blair come, you will have a *friend,* personal and *political,* who, instead of occupying you in individual and intestine broils, will unite in the support of the great principles which Gen. Jackson is attempting to introduce in our Government, or rather to revive in its administration. For one thing I can vouch—he will come wholly unpledged to any man or men. He will support Gen. Jackson as the means of giving effect to great principles; but beyond him he has neither pledges nor purposes, so far as regards men.[8]

The future course of the *Telegraph* could hardly have been in doubt to Kendall, Barry, Lewis, and others nearest the President. Kendall's purpose seems to have been to keep Green in good spirits as long as possible. As to the most advantageous time for establishing a new press, Kendall was hesitant to decide as late as November 18, 1830, when he wrote to Green that he was sorry Blair had suddenly decided to come to Washington.[9] Years afterward, Kendall wrote in his *Autobiography* that the friends of Jackson did not "desire to supersede the *Telegraph* as an official paper, or to deprive General Green of the printing of Congress, should he remain faithful, but to furnish an auxiliary paper, published semi-weekly, and sustained by its subscriptions, advertising, and job work." [10]

The exact time when the subject of a new press was broached to Jackson is not clear. Kendall says the President at first opposed the plan for fear of opposition between the two organs.[11] Green's fortune would have been far different, if he could have lent himself to political discipline, turned from Calhoun, and used his caustic pen for Jackson. But the break with Calhoun convinced Jackson that he must have a new editor and a new organ to defend his policies. On June 26, 1830, he wrote Major Lewis: "The truth is, he [Green] has professed to me to be heart and soul against the Bank, but his idol controls him as much as the showman does his puppets, and we must get another organ to announce

[8] *National Intelligencer,* Mar. 28, 1831.
[9] *Ibid.,* Mar. 31, 1831.
[10] Kendall, *op. cit.,* 371-74.
[11] *Ibid.*

the policy, and defend the administration, in his hands it is more injured than by all the opposition." [12] After consulting Barry, he caused Kendall to write to Blair about establishing the new organ.[13] Blair had good reasons for being hesitant about becoming entirely responsible for the proposed paper. He was financially embarrassed. The exact course to be followed with respect to the *Telegraph* was not clear to Jackson's friends. It was still hoped by many that Green might remain tolerably loyal. In that case the new paper must not attack Green, but attempt to preserve peace and harmony as far as possible. Kendall reassured Blair that he would assume half of the responsibility for the establishment of a paper if Blair would grant him the privilege of resigning his office at his discretion to become a partner in the new press. Upon that reassurance Blair left Kentucky for Washington.[14]

2

"If the country had been searched for the express purpose of selecting the man best fitted for the editorship of the proposed organ, no one could have been found whose history, opinions, antipathies, and cast of character so adapted him for the post as Francis P. Blair of Kentucky." [15] So writes Parton, the biographer of Andrew Jackson, who knew the galaxy of editors who informed the public from 1840 to 1860. Blair had the experience of being an ardent Kentucky politician. He had been an opponent of the United States Bank since 1811. His experiences as president of the Commonwealth Bank acquainted him with the vulnerable points of the Bank of the United States, and he drew upon his experience to advantage during his editorial career. Federalism and John Q. Adams were anathema to him, and he abhorred nullification, although he had sympathy for the South. Before Kendall left Frankfort he consulted with Blair about the policy

[12] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 512.

[13] Kendall, *op. cit.*, 371-74; Benton, I, 128-30. Benton credits the story which relates that Jackson was shown a copy of the *Argus of Western America* in which was a spirited editorial on Nullification. Upon inquiring the name of the author of the refutation he was informed that Francis P. Blair of Frankfort, Kentucky, had written it. Jackson thereupon had Kendall to write to Blair inviting him to come to Washington to establish the *Globe*. This story is generally given credence by writers who discuss the subject of founding of the *Globe*.

[14] *National Intelligencer*, Mar. 31, 1831; Benton, *op. cit.*; Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, 87.

[15] Parton, *op. cit.*, III, 336.

of the *Argus of Western America.*[16] Blair's linguistic abilities had been developed since he left college. His editorials in the *Argus* show his proficiency at writing in a vigorous style; he became slashing and fierce when his belligerency was aroused. And though he was a warrior upon paper he never stooped to the vituperation and the violent and defamatory partisan warfare which characterized William Duane of the Philadelphia *Aurora* of Jefferson's and Washington's time.[17]

In personal appearance Blair was disappointing to those who thought of him as a big, rough Kentucky frontiersman. John C. Rives, who became Blair's financial partner in the *Globe* in 1832, humorously described him in 1856 as being

> about five feet ten inches high, and would be full six feet if his brain were on the top of his head, instead of being in a *poll* behind it. He looks like a skeleton, lacks but little of being one, and weighed last spring [1855], when dressed in thick winter clothing, one hundred and seven pounds, all told; about eighty-five of which, we suppose, was bone, and the other twenty-two pounds, made up of gristle, nerve, and brain . . . flesh he has none His face is narrow, and of the hatchet kind, according with his meat-ax disposition when writing about his enemies. His complexion is fair, his hair sandy, and his eyes blue—his countenance remarkably mild.[18]

Parton seriously and sympathetically described him as being in "person slender and unimposing, in demeanor, retiring and quiet, in character amiable, affectionate, and grateful." After he had been established in Washington many Jacksonians came to his office to see the thunderer of their party whom they had imagined as a Kentuckian of large proportions with pistols peeping from his breast-pocket, and a bowie-knife stiffening his back. But they were amazed upon beholding the little man sitting in a corner, writing on his knee, as the great editor they had come to get sight of.[19]

Blair did not seek any great wealth; however, his pecuniary circumstances in 1830 were extremely embarrassing.[20] After pay-

[16] *Ibid.; National Intelligencer,* Mar. 28, 1831.
[17] *Argus, passim;* Parton, *op. cit.,* III, 336-37; Alexander K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century* (Salem, Mass., 1902), 42.
[18] The *Globe,* June 23, 1856.
[19] Parton, *op. cit.,* III, 336-37.
[20] Kendall, *op. cit.,* 371-74; Mackenzie, *op. cit.,* 87.

ing $2,000 on one man's note, securing a release from another for $37, and getting a third man's note cancelled for about $200,[21] he was ready to answer Jackson's summons. Leaving the little city of Frankfort with its population of less than two thousand,[22] he went to Washington. "He reached the capital in a sorry plight; almost penniless, with a single presentable coat, and that a frock-coat; with a great gash in the side of his head from an overset near Washington." He appeared at the President's office, where he found Major Lewis, who concealed his shock of disappointment with difficulty. For weeks Blair had been the coming man to all the *habitués* of that apartment. When Duff Green had ventured to criticize the administration they had knowingly and confidently said to each other, in effect: "Never mind. Wait till Blair comes. He will talk to him." And here was Blair—"this little man attired in frock-coat and court-plaster!" Said Major Lewis, with a sly glance at the black-patch on Blair's forehead: "Mr. Blair, we want stout hearts and sound heads here."[23]

President Jackson gained Blair's admiration and respect as quickly as he was won by Blair. At the first interview the President explained his views of the political intrigues of the nullifiers, of Clay's opposition, of Major Eaton, and of the difficulties of his own household. Even his nephew, Major Donelson, seemed to be leaning toward the nullifiers. The President invited Blair to sit beside him on a sofa where, with his arm on Blair's shoulder, he told about his troubles. He wanted Blair to be on his guard against the articles which Donelson might write for the *Globe*. He insisted that Blair dine with him that evening. No doubt Blair accepted the warm invitation hesitatingly. When the hour came, he was horrified to find "ambassadors and other high personages assembled in the East Room, all in costume superb. The tails of his uncomfortable frock coat hung heavily upon the soul of the stranger [Blair], who shrank into a corner abashed and miserable." But when the President entered, he sought out the timid Blair, placed him at the head of the table in the seat of honor and at his own right hand, and completed the conquest of Blair's heart.[24]

[21] Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, 87.
[22] *Argus*, Sept. 29, 1830.
[23] Parton, *op. cit.*, III, 337.
[24] *Ibid.*, 337-38.

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Blair wrote (February 5, 1831) to Mrs. Benjamin Gratz, sister of his wife, what he thought of Jackson. It was a great mistake to think of Old Hickory being in leading-strings, as the coalition said. Jackson was as much superior in Washington as he was with the generals in the war. "He is a man of admirable judgment," continued Blair. "I have seen proof of it in the direction which he has given to affairs this winter, in which I know he differed from his advisers." He was adopting measures which were opposed by those who were in supposed control. Then Blair assured Mrs. Gratz—she was a strong supporter of Henry Clay—that Jackson was fighting a great political battle, and it would be found that he would vanquish those who contended with him as he had always done his private or public enemies. Personally, Blair liked Jackson better than any other person whom he had met in Washington. Jackson was benevolent and kind to a fault to those whom he loved,—frank, affectionate, and full of hospitality.[25]

The arrangements for starting the new paper were made by Kendall before Blair arrived in Washington. Kendall, however, never held any pecuniary interest in the paper.[26] A printer was employed to do the printing until a press could be procured. Kendall and Blair decided to begin it as a semi-weekly paper at a cost of five dollars a year to subscribers, and to issue a weekly edition at $2.50 a year.[27] The first issue appeared December 7, 1830, as a Republican paper, dedicated to the defense of the principles for which Andrew Jackson stood. Duff Green laconically recognized it as having a respectable appearance and promising to become an efficient co-laborer in the cause of republicanism. Gales and Seaton, of the *National Intelligencer,* characteristically described its politics as being strongly on the side of the administration.[28] Federal office-holders receiving a salary as high as one thousand dollars were expected to subscribe to it.[29] Many of the departments of government gave it job work, although Van Buren ab-

[25] Clay, *op. cit.,* 187-99. This article includes a series of letters written by Blair to Mrs. Benjamin Gratz.

[26] The *Globe,* Oct. 23, 1833; Aug. 18, 1834.

[27] *United States Telegraph,* Dec. 11, 1830. Washington, D. C.

[28] *National Intelligencer,* Dec. 13, 1830.

[29] Benjamin Perley Poore, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years In The National Metropolis* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1886), I, 104.

solutely refused to do so, to avoid being accused of bringing it into existence to promote his own interests. Blair called his paper the *Globe,* and as he said of it, "like the globe which we inhabit [it], was created out of nothing." [80]

3

The problems which confronted Blair as editor of the *Globe* were often baffling. Without the constant support of Jackson he doubtless would have been forced to give up the venture. Tact, discretion, and fearlessness were required to squirm skilfully through the political entanglements which made the capital one of the liveliest places in the country. On the question of nullification, his course was determined before he reached Washington. Jackson expected him to give that doctrine its deathblow, and let Calhoun die politically with it. Blair had the veto on the Maysville Road bill to explain. There was the tariff to be adjusted, the Indians to be subdued and settled, and neither last nor least, the presidential succession to be determined. The ragged ends of the party must be cut off or smoothed out. Men who could not or would not conform to Jacksonism were to be marked and made examples of party discipline.

While Blair was obedient and affable, and admired Jackson as the greatest man of his day, he was not slavish. He had a policy of his own, one which had grown up through his years of political experiences. Blair's editorials are ample proof that he believed that he was a Jeffersonian democrat and a Jacksonian republican. He went as far as Jefferson in the state-rights theory, but he balked when the Union was in danger of disruption. The Constitution was a sacred instrument written by the fathers who knew what was best. It must be defended against all its enemies at all times at any cost. Education and experience made Blair sympathize with western states; his Blair ancestry linked him with the East. He wanted cheap lands to encourage western settlements, furnish the poor with homes, and develop the strength and power of the nation.

The financial success of the *Globe* was doubtful. Kendall and

[80] Ainsworth Rand Spofford, "Washington In Literature," in *Records* of the Columbia Historical Society, VI, 45.

Blair were too poor to buy types and galleys. Jackson rescued them by bringing pressure to bear on party men in their favor. Friends of the administration were requested to subscribe to a fund for the establishment of the *Globe*. Mordecai Noah contributed two hundred dollars for the cause.[31] By December 12, 1830, Blair had sold his first edition, mostly to members of Congress, and was quite certain of getting the patronage of the public offices to a considerable extent. He had a scheme under way to underbid Gales and Seaton on publishing old documents for Congress. He would do it for half and make two-thirds profit.[32] Two thousand copies of the *Globe* were necessary to supply the demand by February, 1831. But only one thousand were paid for in advance. The opposition was planning to pass a resolution to demand an investigation to learn how much profit his printer had made; so he had to set up his own press and get all the public patronage which, he thought, would amount to twenty thousand dollars.[33] Word was passed to the administration presses that the *Globe* was the official paper. Officials began to exert themselves in obtaining subscriptions. Hundreds of them poured in daily. A friend of the Bank of the United States advanced two hundred dollars to be used to buy materials, only to have Blair promptly return the money to its owner. He refused to be obligated to a friend of the Bank. Lewis supplied Jackson with a scheme to force obedience from those secretaries of departments who were not granting their printing to the *Globe*. An order compelling the members of the Cabinet to make quarterly reports to the President was issued by Jackson. Each member had to render an account of the sums paid, and to whom paid, in his department for printing. The President thus virtually commanded that the *Globe* be given a share of the public printing. Friends of Jackson advanced money to buy a Napier press, which, also, permitted him to begin the (Daily) *Globe*. The surety of financial success came, however, with the formation of a business partnership with John C. Rives in 1832, the reëlection of Jackson, and the election of Blair and Rives as printers to Congress in 1833.[34]

[31] Lexington *Observer and Kentucky Reporter*, Oct. 16, 1833.

[32] Clay, Blair to Mrs. Gratz, Dec. 12, 1830; Kendall, *op. cit.*, 471-74; Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, 87.

[33] Clay, *op. cit.*, Blair to Mrs. Gratz, Feb. 5, 1831.

[34] Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, 88; the *Globe*, Oct. 7, 1833; Spofford, *op. cit.*, 45.

The importance which Jackson's close friends attached to founding the *Globe* can hardly be understood today. Van Buren wrote confidentially in 1823 to Hoyt about the importance of the Albany *Argus* to his party in New York: "Without a paper thus edited at Albany we may hang our harps on the willows. With it, the party can survive a thousand such convulsions as those which now agitate and probably alarm most of those around you." [35] In 1830 Van Buren was Secretary of State. While he did not directly cause the establishment of the *Globe,* he countenanced the action of his friends in doing so. Green's *Telegraph* was favorable to Calhoun, could not be counted on absolutely for support of Jackson, and would oppose the succession of Van Buren. The friends of Jackson considered it necessary to have a master partisan editor. Kendall said years later that they regarded measures more than men, and desired Jackson's "reelection for another four years, not so much for his own sake as to effect reforms in the government which no other man was capable of bringing about." [36] Kendall could have almost copied his statement verbatim from Blair's editorial in the first issue of the *Globe.* The administration organ was launched, and Blair's task was to satisfy his friends—the partisan reformers.

[35] Edward Morse Shepard, *Martin Van Buren* (New York, 1897), 163.
[36] Kendall, *op. cit.,* 471-74.

CHAPTER VIII

The Policy of the *Globe*

"The World Is Governed Too Much."—Blair.

I

Blair began his battle for Jackson with the first issue of the *Globe*. "It will support the administration—and, *as it is said,* be opposed to the Telegraph," announced Niles' *Register*. "It is the purpose of the Editor to dedicate this paper to the discussion and maintenance of the principles which brought General Jackson into office, and which he brought with him into office," wrote Blair in his prospectus. Secondly, "as a means of giving permanent effect to those principles, which are considered essential to the preservation, peace, and prosperity of the Union," he proposed to advocate the reëlection of the President.[1]

Four months of supporting Jackson gave Blair a personal reason for advocating Jackson's cause. The warm-hearted old hero of New Orleans completely won Blair's admiration and fidelity. When he bought a cow, he was an early morning visitor at the President's Mansion, where he left a little pail of milk for the President's family, and where he received inspiration and direction. Few men, indeed, had an opportunity to come into such close intimacy with Jackson. "You may rely on it," Blair wrote to Mrs. Gratz, "he is as true a patriot as ever breathed, and as much a democrat as your humble servant. Mr. Gratz [a Clay man] would call him a Jacobin." Then Blair confidentially told Mrs. Gratz that his prospects were brightening: "If Old Hickory lives I shall undoubtedly be a *great man* some day. He likes me vastly, and as I am a sinner and hope to be saved he values my opinion in some things, and those nearest to him, more than he

[1] *Telegraph,* Dec. 11, 1830.

does the Magician's [Van Buren]. But this is egotism; you must not say a word about it." [2]

The labyrinth of intrigues made him weary and sick at heart, and he wrote Mrs. Gratz that he would welcome the day, six years from then, when he could return to his little cottage in Kentucky. Calhoun was Blair's choice for a successor when Blair left Kentucky for Washington. In six months' time Calhoun's controversy with Jackson caused Blair to agree with Clay that Calhoun was a knave. Blair soon came to believe that Calhoun had been plotting for the presidency from the moment Jackson had reached Washington, and had been the prime mover in the Eaton scandal. Eaton was a gentleman, an excellent man of sound political sense for whom the President had great affection. But Calhoun! He made Blair want to take his rest by writing a letter to Mrs. Gratz so that he could vent his bitterness on the morrow on that rascal's tergiversations. Van Buren was a different character. He was a man of excellent judgment and prudence, thought Blair.[3] Yet he warned Van Buren that should he dare put himself in opposition to Jackson the *Globe* would turn against him with the same promptitude as it had against Calhoun. Plots, intrigues, and conspiracies would be disclosed regardless of whom they touched or injured. Prompt exposure and stern reprobation awaited all who concocted a plot for personal aggrandizement, without regard to principle or public good.[4]

The iron hand was laid on all Democrats who chose to differ with Jackson's policies. They had to conform or be harried out of the party. Persuasion was first used; that failing, warning was given, soon to be followed by a reading out of the party.[5] Blair called it his policy of shooting the deserters.[6] In many cases he felt it best to ignore an obstreperous party member until he was politically killed through the ominous silence of the *Globe*.[7] The enemies of Blair and the *Globe* often charged him with being unprincipled, a liar, a faunching steed, or an ogre that attacked men in a savage and ferocious manner. These charges do not

[2] Clay, *op. cit.*, 187-99. Blair to Mrs. Gratz, Mar. 2, 1831.
[3] Clay, *op. cit.*, 187-99.
[4] The *Globe*, Mar. 16, 1831.
[5] *Ibid., passim*. The *Globe* is full of evidences of this kind.
[6] *Ibid.*, June 23, 1856.
[7] *Ibid.*, John C. Rives in answer to Col. Claiborne.

agree with a characterization of Blair by John C. Rives, who knew Blair intimately, worked in the same office, and shared with him the fortunes and misfortunes of the *Globe*. Men have said John C. Rives stood unimpeachable. "Often," said Rives, "when he was about attacking a man, whom he respected personally, but abhorred politically, he said to us, 'It gives me pain to attack that man; but he is restive and kicking in the traces. We must whip him in or whip him out at once, before he gets a little drove to go off with him.'" [8]

Blair was a member of the Kitchen Cabinet. The President often consulted with him, but if after consultation he was of the same opinion still, that settled it. The President had his way. Nevertheless, Blair so won his way into the heart of the old hero that his suggestions were very often acted upon as if Jackson had thought of them himself. Mrs. Blair became an ardent admirer of Jackson, felt sorry for him, and always sent her best wishes for his good health when he was away. Young Francis Preston Blair, son of the editor of the *Globe,* was a favorite at the White House.[9] When the President went off for the Rip Raps for a little vacation, Blair, the editor, went along to cheer him, and the benevolent, appreciative President paid all the expenses of the trip.[10] By May 10, 1831, Blair was writing Mrs. Gratz: "Where I am I can do nothing wrong. If Van Buren says, 'You are rash in this business, Mr. Blair,' the old hero says, 'You are right, Mr. Blair, I'll stand by you.'" [11] Was Blair as influential with Jackson as Kendall? John C. Rives, a friend of both Blair and Kendall, deliberately wrote that it was Kendall who advised the President as much as any other man until December, 1830. "After that," says Rives, "we think he consulted chiefly with Blair." [12]

2

The official character of the *Globe* was evident in its announcement of January 22, 1831. Blair proclaimed on that date: *"We are permitted to say, that if it should be the will of the Nation to call*

[8] The *Globe,* June 23, 1856; *Niles' Register,* XLIX, 78. Oct. 3, 1835.
[9] James Dabney McCabe, *The Life and Public Services of Horatio Seymour Together with a Complete and Authentic Life of Francis P. Blair, Jr.* (New York, 1868), 299-300.
[10] Clay, *op. cit.,* 187-99. [11] *Ibid.* [12] The *Globe,* June 23, 1856.

on the President to serve a second term in the Chief Magistracy, he will not decline the summons." Although this action on the part of the President, in announcing himself for reëlection, had been expected, the die was definitely cast, the fight was on; and Blair eagerly entered the fray. The *Globe* stood, henceforth, first in the favors of the administration, while Green and his *Telegraph* were cast aside. Gales confessed to his readers just five days after the announcement of Jackson for reëlection to the presidency: Blair "is a man of veracity, intimate at the palace, and deep in the confidence of the President's advisers"—a man who "must be believed when professing to act by *authority*." [13]

Kendall and his coterie of friends labored to impress the public that measures, not men, were at stake.[14] The *Globe* emphasized as a cardinal principle of the Jacksonians, that Jackson must be reëlected to reform the government. "What is the only legitimate object of government?" asked Blair. And then he answered his own question, in bold italics: "To protect man in the pursuit of happiness." Every man should enjoy the proceeds of his labor; the national government owed protection to the states in the exercise of their just powers without interference with the pursuits of the people. Once the federal government was forced to let the people alone, an era of bustling enterprise and smiling content would be ushered in. Then men from different sections of the Union would meet as brothers and the halls of the Capitol would cease to ring with angry recriminations.[15] Blair tried to give daily expression to this political philosophy which was roughly summarized in his motto for the *Globe: The World is governed too much.*

The primary issues in the campaign of 1832 were probably Jackson and the Bank, but the administration organ claimed the true policy of the general government was to make itself felt by the states and the people as little as possible. Such a policy of expediency was a peace offering to the angry state-rights men.

Blair first opposed Jackson's veto of the Maysville Road bill, and he informed the Jacksonians through the *Globe,* that internal improvements were commendable. But he was soon converted to

[13] *National Intelligencer,* Jan. 27, 1831.
[14] Kendall, *op. cit.,* 370-74.
[15] *Telegraph,* Dec. 11, 1830.

Jackson's view stating that where internal improvements were wholly within the state it was the business of the state to supervise and pay for them. Where improvements of rivers touched more than one state, he said, they were fit subjects for national concern. According to him the principle involved in Jackson's veto of the Maysville Road bill was fundamental and just.[16] The President had to pursue that policy or bankrupt the government.[17]

3

It was next to impossible for the *Globe* and the *Telegraph* to maintain friendly relations. Green perforce tolerated the *Globe* and gave it studied silence until Calhoun published his correspondence with Jackson concerning the invasion of Florida.

Green insisted that Van Buren was responsible for the rupture between Jackson and Calhoun. He was apparently satisfied that it was a concocted scheme to ruin Calhoun's chance for the presidency. As to the Jackson-Calhoun correspondence, Green said that for days he refused to read it, hoping that a reconciliation might be effected. At last, however, he recognized the fact that it was necessary to desert his friends and his principles if he failed to stand with Calhoun. "We were compelled to choose," said Green, "and we took the weaker side; not because we preferred Mr. Calhoun, but because his was the side of truth and honor."[18] To give force to his convictions he offered, before the rupture, to quit the *Telegraph* on receipt of a payment equal to the actual cost of his types and press. But at the earnest solicitation of Jackson, Green remained in Washington. The rising political storm between the Van Buren-Jackson and the Calhoun forces could not be stayed; so Green resolved that the world should know that there was one press which Jackson could not buy, "one editor whom he could not intimidate," and, therefore, he refused to visit the President, although invited to the White House, and "bade him defiance" by refusing to receive the President's hand in friendliness, though it was offered him before the Cabinet and Congress.[19]

[16] *Ibid.*, July 11, 1831; *Argus,* Feb. 23, 1831; Collins, *op. cit.,* I, 516.
[17] *Argus,* Feb. 23, 1831.
[18] Parton, III, 333-34.
[19] Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690-1872* (New York, 1873), 236-37.

On the other hand, Benton relates in his *Thirty Years' View* that the intriguing Green approached Duncanson, a citizen printer in Washington, at a Presidential levee (winter of 1920-31) upon the subject of the coming election. Benton declared that Green told Duncanson of the coming rupture between Calhoun and Jackson, of the plan to prevent Jackson from coming forward for reëlection in 1832, and of the plan to publish the Calhoun-Jackson correspondence at the right moment. Van Buren was to be driven from the political arena. Political newspapers in the most prominent points in the states were to be first secured, and, according to preconceived arrangements, they were to take their cue from the *Telegraph* to boom Calhoun for President. Thus the storm of opposition to Jackson would seem to be universal, the indignation against Van Buren appear so great, and the country would be so startled, that Jackson's popularity could not save him and Van Buren.[20]

Duncanson was then urged by Green to enter into the scheme to ruin Van Buren's political prospects as the successor to Jackson in 1836 by becoming editor of the *Argus of Western America.* Flattering inducements were offered, but Duncanson was a friend of Jackson and desired his reëlection. Upon making a threat to reveal the secrets which Green had told him, Duncanson was assured by Green that the matter was not definitely settled. Some time later Green renewed his offer to Duncanson who consulted his friends and had the President informed of Green's intrigues.

The administration hesitated to force a break with Calhoun and the *Telegraph.* Clay was successfully rallying the tag ends of his factions into a strong opposition. Friends of the Bank and internal improvements joined hands to fight Jackson, the king of the spoils system. The November elections were not too reassuring, and internal disaffections were dreaded. Calhoun miscalculated, however, when he thought the hesitant President could be forced to throw Van Buren overboard, if once the latter were shown to be the instigator of the nefarious scheme to set himself up as a successor. Letters from friends were gathered and the correspondence prepared for publication. By January 13, 1831, Calhoun considered himself ready. Friends had read the corre-

[20] Benton, *op. cit.*, I, 128-30.

spondence; the result was strengthening his cause, he thought; and he refused to renew friendly intercourse with the President until the latter retracted his charge of Calhoun's insincerity. Calhoun imagined that those who concocted the whole affair were sick of their mistakes. He gave the correspondence in manuscript form to Eaton to amend where passages might hurt Jackson's feelings. Eaton promised to present the manuscript to Jackson, but failed to fulfill his promise and returned it to Calhoun without any emendations or explanations. Calhoun was trapped. He expected a smooth road ahead and prepared for the great day by having Green publish (February 15, 1831) a list of excerpts from Van Buren papers to prove that Van Buren was scheming for the presidency if Jackson refused to run again. On the 17th of February the pamphlet was published.[21]

The time for an open break between Calhoun and Jackson and between the *Globe* and the *Telegraph* had come. The *Globe* commented on the pamphlet, but remained silent on the action of the editor of the *Telegraph* (February 19). On the 21st of February the *Telegraph* assaulted the *Globe* as the organ of plotters and contrivers. Blair, urged on by the friends of Van Buren and the administration, could now vent his repressed bitterness upon the heads of Green and Calhoun without fear of restraint, save that of the rules of a gentleman. The breach was an irreparable one. The *Globe* called it a "firebrand wantonly thrown into the republican party" and declared: "If this be not an arraignment of the president, at the bar of public opinion, it has no motive or meaning."[22] Intrigue had occupied the time of a president-making Congress which was paid by a laboring people to make laws. These "intrigues were set on foot directly after the organization of the administration to bring out Mr. Calhoun for the Presidency for the next four years, whether Gen. Jackson should be a candidate or not." This was the movement which had so embarrassed the administration and had degraded Congress by pulling it down to the level of a club of managers which robbed the President of its assistance in reform and left him alone to struggle against the abuses and corruptions which afflicted the

[21] John Spencer Bassett, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (2 vols., Garden City, N. Y., 1911), II, 515-17; the *Globe*, Mar. 28, 1831.

[22] *Niles' Register*, Feb. 26, 1831; *National Intelligencer*, Mar. 31, 1831.

country. And the editor of the *Telegraph* was one of the principal agents in that business from the beginning! A spicy article, commented Gales of the *National Intelligencer;* "Ungrateful Hypocrite," snarled Green at Blair; liar, retorted the *Globe.*

The anti-Jackson press watched gleefully the course of the controversy. The dignified *National Intelligencer* announced that "we shall take care to give our readers, as soon as it appears, everything which emanates from either of the principals in this controversy."

Niles chronicled in his *Weekly Register* that "Mr. Calhoun had certainly made out his case ably," and agreed that the *Globe* was right in its assertion that Calhoun had arraigned the administration to vindicate himself. This serene editor whose motto was "The Past—The Present—For the Future," promised to "do all we can, and as soon as we can to preserve a history of things, 'at this momentous crisis.'" [23] Then he hurried at much increased cost to set up the type for publishing the pamphlet in the *Weekly Register.* Articles were coming in so fast that he had no room for them. "The excitement at Washington was unprecedented for eight or ten days before the close of the session [of Congress] and on many accounts; and many strange rumors were afloat, as to expected change in the condition of persons and things." [24]

On April 1 the *Telegraph* announced: *"The ban has gone forth*—Amos Kendall & Company have discontinued their subscription to the *Telegraph.* Ahem!" Blair thought that it was a big company. His subscriptions were multiplying rapidly.[25] Then the *Globe* gathered evidence against Green, who had printed many excerpts to show that disaffection would result if Jackson ran for president again. Soon, however, the brandishes of the *Globe* and the *Telegraph* were changed to occasional long shots. By June 27, the *Globe* found new reasons for assailing the *Telegraph.* Green no longer disguised his feelings. He did not pretend to advocate General Jackson's reëlection, and was openly seeking a coalition with the friends of Henry Clay. Extremes were to be made to meet. Ultra-Tariffism and Nullification, said the *Globe,* were to be brought to act in concert, and those two master spirits, Clay

[23] *Niles' Register,* Feb. 26, 1831.
[24] *Ibid.,* Mar. 5, 1831.
[25] *Telegraph,* Apr. 1; *National Intelligencer,* Apr. 4, 1831; the *Globe,* Apr. 6, 1831.

and Calhoun, were to "preside over the impious amalgamation!" [26] These things were beyond countenance. This man, Duff Green, who should have defended the President, had tried to poison him politically. "The character of the President is dearer to him than his life. He who would rob him of the unblemished honor, which has been ascribed to him by the voice of his country, strikes deeper than his vitals. The reputation of the President could be reached only by one who wore the disguise of a friend. It has been an invidious duty to expose such an assailant. We shall hereafter have as little to say of the Telegraph as of any other opposition paper." [27] The *Telegraph* was thus read out of the "republican family," and the party.

Blair's country correspondence became voluminous as the desertions from the *Telegraph* increased. R. N. Thweatt wrote that Jackson's course toward Calhoun was approved by every intelligent man he had talked with in Colesville, Maryland. A. R. North of Lynchburg, Virginia, discovered that Blair was a "whole Hog Jackson man, the only kind that suits me." A Mr. Gray wanted the *Globe* because he was a "Jackson man up to the hub," and wanted information on the "welfare of the old man & his Cabinet," and C. W. Hall of Kingsport, Tennessee, subscribed for the *Globe* because he believed Blair to be an honest editor in a time when few of such men lived.[28] Nearly four thousand subscribers read the *Globe* and distributed it among their friends before it was a year old. The *Globe* set the pace for a hundred other newspapers. The administration closed in its ranks, came to Van Buren's assistance, and rapidly disillusioned Calhoun. Isolated, broken, and desperate, Calhoun fell to the level of a sectional leader [29] while Green's *Telegraph* withered away and died in 1837.

4

The fall of the *Telegraph* left the *Globe* supreme in its field. It was the official organ of the administration. Its editor was an ugly little man whose hard features were favorably supplemented by bland manners, mild temper, and a countenance which

[26] *Ibid.*, June 27, 1831.
[27] *Ibid.*, June 17, 1831.
[28] Blair-Rives MSS.
[29] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 518-19.

evinced benevolence.[30] He was fearless and prided himself on his ability to use a long Kentucky rifle which he kept cleaned and at hand. His body seemed to be a bundle of energy, and his mental acumen was readily applied to the profit of his party. To have seen him going down Pennsylvania Avenue would have disarmed the most optimistic partisan. No one could have supposed that he could produce the "terrible invectives that daily emanated from his prolific and vigorous pen." Colonel Claiborne described his editorials as a "volcano constantly in eruption, blazing, burning, overwhelming with its lava floods all that ventured to withstand it."[31]

From Blair's brain of prodigious energy flowed the leaders for the *Globe.* Rives, who had served for three years as a confidential clerk to Green in the office of the *Telegraph,* and who resigned a clerkship in the Department of the Treasury April 11, 1832, to join Blair as a business partner, tells us that Blair was equally proficient whether he wrote on men or measures.[32] A few personal friends who were political enemies escaped Blair's terrible philippics. Among those whom he could not bring himself to attack were W. W. Seaton, of the *National Intelligencer,* and John J. Crittenden. Rives and Colonel Claiborne attested that Blair's powerful leaders were jotted down on scraps of paper held on his knee. He used a lead pencil, sat on a stool behind the door of the office, and wrote so hurriedly when he was attacking the Bank of the United States that two boys were employed to carry copy to the typesetters. "We have known him," says Rives, "to send one of the boys after the other to overtake him, and get the last word on the last sheet sent off."[33]

Compared with the *Richmond Enquirer* or the *National Intelligencer,* the *Globe* was a radical paper. It was dogmatic, bold, and defiant. At times the editor hesitated when it was politic to do so. His gift for satire played to his advantage and to the great discomfiture of the enemy. Blair's sarcasm bit like vipers, and friends and foes alike came to dread his editorial attacks.[34] Declaring almost indiscriminate war on the opposition, he shaped the

[30] Hudson, *op. cit.,* 243-46. "Letter of Colonel Claiborne [.] Recollections of the Metropolitan Press," May 28, 1856, quoted by Hudson.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] The *Globe,* June 23, 1856.
[33] *Ibid.;* Hudson, *op. cit.,* 243-46.
[34] Hudson, *op. cit.,* 236-46.

policy of the *Globe* to appeal to laborers, debtors, frontiersmen, and partisans.

The prominent politicians, journalists, bankers, and pressing questions of great importance, came within the range of Blair's editorials. If a man were of little significance in the political field, Rives took him in tow. Defenses of deserters of Jackson's cause were trumped up, even though there had never been charges against them. Others were ominously ignored by the *Globe*. In one way or another, political foes were done to death by the editorial scalping knife.[35] "Measures not men" was the cry of the Jacksonians. The people liked it. Through July, August, and September of 1831 new subscriptions mounted to an average of almost one hundred a week. Blair was informed by letters from farmers, laborers, and others devoted to the cause, to strike off their names the moment he deserted Old Hickory. He quickly replied: "We relinquish all claims on them when we desert the President."[36]

The rapid growth of the *Globe* was attributed by Blair to the influence and personality of Jackson. Van Buren, however, and Barry, Kendall, and various other officials and friends worked for the administration organ. Blair knew how to appeal to popular opinion. The West wanted cheap lands; the *Globe* championed the cause of the West and advocated the abolition of imprisonment for debt.[37] Those who wanted social and political reforms found solace in article after article on the subject. The Reform Bill (1832) in England received Blair's hearty support; he condemned the hated aristocratic lords as the privileged class which sucked the life-blood from the laborers, and he accused the rich men in America of sympathizing with the aristocrats of England.[38] Revolutionary War veterans had their patriotic vanity tickled by anti-British editorials; Green of the *Telegraph* was notified that whatever he said was absolutely untrue; and the errors of the *National Intelligencer* were consecutively numbered

[35] The *Globe*, June 23, 1856.
[36] *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1831.
[37] *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 17, Mar. 19, 1834; Jan. 9, June 13, Aug. 12, 1835; Jan. 25, Feb. 12, May 5, July 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, Aug. 27, Sept. 27, 1836, and through to 1845.
[38] *Ibid.*, Nov. 9, June 21, 1831.

as they occurred. If depression came upon the country, the opposition and the United States Bank got the blame. Prosperity followed Jackson.

As editor of the official paper, Blair's work cost him a prodigious amount of labor. It is surprising that his health did not give way under the strain. He hoed in his garden and rode horseback for physical exercise. The strong-minded and able Mrs. Blair assisted him almost daily by reading the exchange papers and selecting from them suitable excerpts for the *Globe*. Lengthy and important country editorials were pointed out to Blair as she read them to him while he hoed his vegetables and flowers. Often he sat down and dashed off an answer to an article that was written by an enemy before he had time for reflection.[39] Many of his editorials consequently show the effects of hasty conclusions, but they are fundamentally Jacksonian.

Blair enjoyed reading good books. He attended the theatre; he liked horses and race-tracks; and he longed for the good old dances under the shade of an arbor on Benson Creek (Kentucky). He used Latin phrases at will. The history of his own country seemed to be a part of him, and references to ancient, European, and English history are freely scattered through his writings. His reviews of books are peculiar to himself. They are made to serve a democratic purpose to a nicety. Of James Fenimore Cooper he wrote:

> It is pleasing to find that our distinguished countryman preserves the purity of his American feelings in the midst of the tainting atmosphere of European Courts.

Quite a different greeting is offered Mrs. Frances Trollope, who visited America (1827-30) and published her impressions of Americans in her first book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* in 1832. Blair resented her adverse criticisms and broad humor, as did many Americans of that day. The book, he said, "is filled with flippant and illiberal remarks upon our manners and institutions" by this "itinerant shrew." She was nothing but a "prejudiced foreigner, of the Tory school of politics" whose

[39] Blair MSS. Blair to J. N. Barker, May 20, 1831.

"egregious inventions" and "sketches of scandal" made her a female Munchausen.[40]

The chief editor of the *National Intelligencer,* Joseph Gales, wrote short, dignified editorials which galled Blair. He could not get hold of the brief, pithy articles with which Gales filled his editorial pages; so he named Gales "Joseph Surface." Since Gales was an Englishman, a supporter of Clay and the Bank, and in opposition to Jackson's régime, Blair had opportunity to accuse Gales of being anti-American, a hireling of the Bank, and an aristocrat.[41] By reading the *National Intelligencer* and the *Globe* one is soon convinced that the new administration organ held its own with the staid old *National Intelligencer,* a paper par excellence. It must have been gratifying to Lewis, Van Buren, and Kendall & Co. to see the *Globe* meet their enemy on equal footing.

A research student would find little satisfaction in thumbing the pages of the daily *Globe* in a search for consistent, well-digested foreign news. Intelligence of this nature was printed for special purposes. Reform movements in England were chronicled to use in political arguments in America. Much excellent material, however, exists for special occasions like the war, the Bank, relations between England, France and America, the Poles, Hungarians, and Greeks. The *Globe* was primarily a political newspaper.

Blair refused to publish the speeches of the opposition. In the first place, he said he had no room for long, tiresome opposition speeches which would crowd out his good news and the speeches of Jackson's friends in Congress; secondly, the *National Intelligencer,* the *Telegraph,* and other papers published such news. He did not care for their stale stuff; thirdly, the opposition press did not publish the speeches of Democrats; consequently, the friends of the administration would find democratic principles propounded in Congress only through the medium of their own paper—the *Globe.*[42] Attempts were made to secure the ablest reporters, regardless of their politics, to report the daily proceedings of Congress.

[40] *Globe,* June 4, 1832; *New International Encyclopedia* (23 vols., New York, 1914-16), Second Edition.

[41] The *Globe,* June 21, 1831; June 4, 1832; May 1, Dec. 5, 1834; June 23, 1856.

[42] *Ibid.,* Feb. 28, May 1, 1832.

Country newspapers were encouraged by the insertion of excerpts from their columns into those of the *Globe*. A public sentiment was thus created. Country press comments got a large proportion of space during special occasions. The Bank, the "American System," election returns, and many other subjects were treated in this manner. The *Globe* was rightly accused of sending prepared articles for publication to friendly presses; and after their appearance in print, of reproducing them in its own columns as an indication of public opinion. It is difficult to determine how extensive was this practice. Kendall wrote voluminously, at times, for party newspapers, and Blair warily sent his private letters to those whom he could trust. The *Globe* was a clearing house for party news; it served, with few exceptions, as an oracle for the administration papers during Jackson's and Van Buren's presidencies. Through its columns Jackson spoke to his partisans. One of his biographers has put it thus: "If it was Blair's voice, Jackson ratified it. If it was Jackson's, Blair promulgated it." [43]

[43] William Graham Sumner, *Andrew Jackson as a Public Man* (Boston, 1882), 280-81; the *Globe,* Oct. 27, 1831.

CHAPTER IX

The Genesis of the War on the Bank

It is not for the benefit of the Country that the "New Coalition" [Clay, Webster, Calhoun] has been formed; nor is any improvement in the public prosperity expected from its success. The struggle is for power, for place, for the public treasure. Men who want foreign missions, judgeships and other valuable offices, unable to swerve the stern integrity of Andrew Jackson and sell to him their influence and support, have united with other aspirants to the Presidency in all sorts of combinations to destroy his popularity and defeat his re-election, that his place may be occupied by one with whom they may bargain for promotion.—The Globe, April 10, 1832.

I

When the political opponents of Jackson decided to make the recharter of the United States Bank an issue to test the popularity of the President, they found his influence weighing heavily in the balance. His opponents thought he was a tyrant drunk with power. They decided to put him to the test in 1831-32. It is not necessary to review the history of the second Bank of the United States, for that has been well done by writers who have looked at it from various angles.

Jackson had opposed banks for constitutional reasons long before the *Globe* was established.[1] He was one of many who believed the second Bank of the United States was unconstitutional.[2] State-rights men of the South and West believed the Bank was detrimental to the welfare of the states. State banking institutions were in arms against the National Bank because the latter had forced them to restrict loans, pay notes in specie, and lose coveted profits. The Democracy, which prided itself upon its devotion to the principle of equality, resented a monetary monopoly. And it must not be forgotten that "inextricably linked with the Demo-

[1] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 689-90.

[2] Ralph Charles Henry Catterall, *The Second Bank of the United States* (Chicago, 1903), 184.

cratic opposition was the ceaseless hostility between rich and poor, the envy and hatred of the man who has nothing for the man who has much, the ill-will which the debtor eternally cherishes for the creditor; all the social arguments directed against the bank gathered force and passion from this feeling and at the same time added to it." [3]

Benton was foremost among those who preferred to see the charter of 1816 die without a substitute. He distributed at public expense the speech which he made on a resolution that he introduced in the Senate on February 2, 1831. The resolution was lost, but it stated that the Bank should not be rechartered, and it gave Benton his desired opportunity to attack; [4] Kendall, who was beginning to assert his dominance over the political thinking of Jackson in 1828, had long been an enemy of the Bank; Hill, a pettifogging politician and newspaper editor of New Hampshire,[5] was a dangerous opponent; Van Buren, the most astute politician of his day, and an enemy of the Bank, was a rising favorite for Vice-President, and willing to play the game of winning the support of Jackson for 1836; with them was Blair, and together they presented formidable opposition to Clay, Webster, Calhoun, and Biddle. Blair opposed the Bank for personal and public reasons. He knew how to touch the heart of the West, and to it and all common men he made his appeal.

To just what degree Blair influenced the President on the Bank question is difficult to determine. John C. Rives thought Benton had the greatest influence of any man in the Senate with the President, and that Blair supplanted Kendall after the former had once established himself in the good graces of Jackson (1831).[6] That of course is merely the opinion of one man. Nevertheless the *Globe* felt its way on the question of the Bank until Clay made it an issue in the campaign; then it opened fire to continue its fulminations against the Bank until long after that institution was dead. Jackson read the *Globe* diligently, depended on it for defense of his character, policies, and administration,[7] and

[3] *Ibid.*, 164-67.

[4] Meigs, *op. cit.*, 201. The Senate refused by a vote of 23-20 to allow Benton to introduce the resolution.

[5] Catterall, *op. cit.*, 171.

[6] *Globe*, June 23, 1856.

[7] Jackson MSS. See Blair-Jackson letters. Blair to Jackson, 1835; Blair to Jackson, Aug. 1, 1835; Aug. 25, 1836; Apr. 23, 1837; etc.

when he wished to have a matter laid before the people, would exclaim, "Send it to Bla-ar." [8]

Biddle asserted that Jackson told him the Bank should receive justice for its good service to the government. But that did not necessarily mean that he favored the recharter of the Bank in 1836. In his first annual message to Congress, December 8, 1829, Jackson asked the people of the United States to deliberate on the subject of rechartering the Bank. He accused the Bank of failure to establish a currency which was uniform and sound. Supporters of Adams and of the Bank protested against the spirit of the message and against thrusting the question upon the country in 1829 when the Bank was not to be rechartered until 1836. Asking for a consideration of the subject was commendable. The state-rights men and the democratic mass opposed to corporations and monopoly were pleased with the message.[9]

James A. Hamilton was asked by the President to work out a suitable plan for a bank which would be subordinated to the treasury department. It should receive deposits, provide a uniform currency, and be responsible for transferring public money. An alternate plan was also asked for. It should be of a mixed character which would fulfill all the purposes of a bank, and be free from the infringement of state rights and the Constitution. Hamilton applied himself to the task, but soon Congress was expressing its dissent to Jackson's suggestions; consequently the plans were dropped. Jackson, however, wrote, July 17, 1830, that he believed there "should be merely a National Bank of Deposit, with power in time of war to issue its bills bearing a moderate rate of interest, and payable at the close of the war, which being guaranteed by the national faith pledged, and based upon our revenue, would be sought after by the monied capitalists, and do away, in time of war, with the necessity of loans." He wanted a bank in which all the nation would benefit rather than a few monied capitalists.

While Blair was writing against the Bank in his editorials in the *Argus,* the Senate Committee on Finance and the Committee on Ways and Means in the House were considering that part of

[8] Bassett, *op. cit.,* II, 513.
[9] Richardson, *op. cit.,* II, 462; Bassett, *op. cit.,* II, 601.

Jackson's message which referred to the Bank. The majority in both House and Senate were in favor of it. Nicholas Biddle wrote the report of the Senate committee and furnished the facts for the Committee on Ways and Means, the chairman of which was George C. McDuffie, ex-governor of South Carolina, and a friend of Calhoun. The reports of the two committees favorable to the Bank were published at the expense of the institution. "McDuffie's report in the House was exhaustive. It controverted the President's reasoning at every point, declared that the Bank was constitutional and expedient, *'that it had actually furnished a circulating medium more uniform than specie,'* and contemptuously condemned Jackson's proposed Bank, 'founded upon the credit of the Government and its revenues,' as being inefficient and monstrous, giving to the government 'a patronage' 'prodigious in its influence' and 'dangerous in its character,' and creating a centralizing agency of enormous potency." To refute Jackson, however, was not to convince him, and the report only fixed him more firmly in his opinion: "I presume it to be," he wrote, "a joint effort, and the best that can be made in its support, and *it is feeble* . . . it will not go unanswered when a proper time arrives." [10]

Jackson's temper was aroused. He now reverted to his old view that the Bank was a hydra of corruption. At this juncture the Eaton trouble arose and headed Calhoun for his downfall. The complicated political situation probably caused Jackson to be calm and reticent. His supreme faith in the people gave him confidence, and without hesitation he repeated his ideas in his second message to Congress December 6, 1830. Biddle had misjudged the President, who he thought would not dare to arouse the hostility of the Bank in the approaching campaign.

Biddle's fears must have been considerably increased when he read Jackson's message. "Nothing," said Jackson, "has occurred to lessen in any degree the dangers which many of our citizens apprehend from that institution as at present organized." He wanted an institution so modified in its principles and structure as to obviate constitutional and other objections.[11] That part of the press which favored the recharter of the Bank spoke of the

[10] Catterall, *op. cit.*, 198-99.

[11] Richardson, *op. cit.*, II, 1092.

message insolently and contemptuously. Van Buren believed that such animadversions would injure the Bank. He realized that it would make a popular issue. Biddle exerted himself to influence public opinion; he secured letters from Monroe and Madison favoring the constitutionality of the Bank, and published speeches, reports, and letters, all tending to prove the expediency in maintaining the Bank of the United States.[12]

The day after the President's message was delivered to Congress, the *Globe* made its first appearance. The President casts corruption aside, declared Blair in one of his first editorials, and appeals to the "people to say whether they will have a *pure* government, which shall confine itself to its proper duties, protecting all in their favorite pursuits, exacting from the people only the necessary means of its own support, and returning all surplusage to the States; or a scene of wide-spread abuse, corruption, injustice, murmuring, and possible insurrection, civil war, and disunion."[13]

Kendall had been eager for a war on the Bank. As a writer for the *Globe* he used his opportunity to denounce the Bank as an evil influence in the United States. Professor William Graham Sumner thought Kendall and Hill were the ultimate agents in bringing on the Bank war,[14] yet he said Blair was stronger in his influence than either of them.[15] That the Jackson party turned against the Bank because it failed to obtain an alliance with it is untenable. The Bank question could not be kept out of politics, and Biddle probably did not believe that he could avoid it. The wealthy class had come gradually to support the institution, while the debtor class, the other poor elements, and many earnest-minded individuals joined the Jackson party.[16]

The move for the reëlection of Jackson and the attempt at the recharter precipitated the Bank war. Clay at first advised his friend, Biddle, not to seek a recharter for the Bank of the United States before the presidential campaign of 1832. He and other opponents sought to embarrass Jackson on such issues as the tariff and the American System. A coalition was formed by the invet-

[12] Catterall, *op. cit.*, 204-05.
[13] The *Globe*, Dec. 7, 1830.
[14] Sumner, *History of Banking*, 197.
[15] Sumner, *Andrew Jackson*, 242-43.
[16] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 588-89, 596; Sumner, *History of Banking*, 192.

erate enemies, Clay and Calhoun, to embarrass the Jacksonians on every public issue.

How Clay's friends could side with Calhoun was a puzzle to Blair. "I am astonished at the implacability of the Clay side to Old Hickory. The latter regards him with much more kindness than he does Calhoun, and yet Mr. Clay's friends support Calhoun in his nullification, etc., against all their natural principles to do it." Calhoun, the knave, had brought Green to Washington to do his dirty work, incorrectly wrote Blair. But he explained to Mrs. Gratz that Calhoun was "at heart one of the Hartford Convention stamp. His nullification is but a scheme to scatter our republic into fragments, that he may rule a part. I always detested McDuffie, and it is perfectly clear that he is as much a latitudinarian as he was when he wrote his pamphlet deriding with the intensest scorn the Virginia Resolution." McDuffie is for a "southern nation, a Carthaginian state" where "Punic faith may come again in vogue under the Proteus, Calhoun." [17]

As the year 1831 passed, Blair advanced his arguments against the Bank one by one. In June he charged the stockholders of the institution with enjoying the exclusive privilege of furnishing the paper currency of the country, and of taxing the people on its issues. They formed a prerogatived class, which, joined by the lawyers, formed the official and monied monopoly that constituted the basis of the American aristocracy. Secondly, the *National Intelligencer,* the *National Gazette,* and the New York *American* were accused of being under the Bank's influence. They had been prompted to attack the *Globe,* were working under Bank pay, and two of them were radically and notoriously opposed to reform in Europe; they were engaged in flooding the United States with extra editions favorable to the Bank.

It was a bold thing to do—to accuse Gales and Seaton, honorable and patriotic citizens of Washington, and editors of the staid old *National Intelligencer,* of subserviency to the Bank. Did Blair have any facts or reasons on which to found such an accusation?

[17] Clay, *op. cit.,* Blair to Mrs. Gratz, July 16, 1831.

As early as November, 1828, Daniel Webster wrote Biddle asking him to lend fifteen thousand dollars to Gales. Webster feared that the financial difficulties into which the editor had fallen might lead to the failure of the *National Intelligencer,* thereby seriously injuring the Adams party. Biddle replied that it would please him to accommodate Gales, but the responsibilities of the editor already exceeded fifty thousand dollars. Furthermore, said Biddle, "it would be wrong for us to consider the matter in any other than a pecuniary light or to treat it on any other than business principles. The value of his paper and the advantage of its continuance are considerations entirely foreign to us." If the Bank were to go out of its way to sustain any newspaper, it would be news which would subject the Bank to uncomfortable reproach. "I have striven to keep the Bank straight and neutral in this conflict of parties and I shall endeavor to persevere in that course." [18] Biddle insisted that the indebtedness of Gales should be reduced. Green of the *Telegraph* had about ten thousand dollars borrowed from the Bank in 1830. Biddle was still hopeful that the Bank could be kept clear of politics.[19]

But Biddle changed his mind on the use of the press. Unfortunately it happened just when the angry President made up his mind to change the nature of the Bank, and to establish an administration organ. Biddle was apprehensive lest Jackson should be irritated by McDuffie's reports in Congress in behalf of the Bank, and adopted the curious method of conciliation through scattering reports and articles over the country. He realized that a great effort was to be made to array the influence of the President and all his party against the Bank. Useful knowledge concerning the institution must be disseminated. So he purposed to use newspapers, merely as channels of communication with the people, which he would pay liberally.[20] Two days later (February 10, 1831) Biddle wrote to Hemphill that the application of Duff Green for a twenty-thousand dollar loan would receive careful and friendly consideration. "The Bank," wrote Biddle, "is glad to have friends from conviction, but seeks none from inter-

[18] McGrane, *Biddle Correspondence,* 58-59. [19] *Ibid.,* 95-6.
[20] *Biddle Correspondence,* 123-24. Biddle to Wm. B. Lawrence, Feb. 8, 1831.

est."[21] Gales was soon wondering how many men would be left in Jackson's party when the *Telegraph* and Calhoun had finished with it.

Biddle wrote on February 28 to Parsons, a Hartford lawyer, that he regretted to see Jackson take the course which he had taken against the Bank. There was but one thing for the Bank to do—use reason and truth in the dissemination of correct information.[22] Telling himself that he would not enter politics, Biddle entered politics. He took another step; he began to search Blair's personal record. Personalities thenceforth became a weapon in the fight over the Bank.

Blair was not averse to a personal fight, but for political effect he decried the policy of making the fight personal, which was being followed by Clay and Calhoun and their supporters. "Coalition!" he shouted. Coalition with weapons of detraction and abuse! Extremes were meeting! Ultra-Tariffism and Nullification were about to join under the leadership of Clay and Calhoun.[23] This impious amalgamation was seeking to make Jackson a common enemy; to kindle faction in the halls of legislation, and to fill the country with discontent and anarchy. It was time for the people to become alarmed!

Blair turned his withering satire upon the *National Gazette,* a Bank supporter. He declared that this newspaper, which presumed to characterize itself with a motto of justice and principle, had sold itself to Biddle.[24] How different public sentiment looked on such things in England! There "with all the wealth of the Banks and Bankers—with all the influence of the Lords, in opposition to it," the people had forged to the front with a majority for parliamentary reform. Not so in the United States. Here the hydra-headed monster had corrupted the state politicians and many Congressmen.

Blair sought to embarrass the Bank and its supporters emphasizing every one of its indiscretions and practices which could be made to appear corrupt in the eyes of the people. He accused it

[21] *Ibid.,* 124. Biddle to John Hemphill, Feb. 10, 1831. Biddle wanted Green to continue to criticize the Bank as he had been doing.

[22] *Biddle Correspondence,* 125.

[23] The *Globe,* June 27, 1831.

[24] *Ibid.,* June 25, July 16, 1831.

of showing partiality to legislators by allowing them to use drafts for currency without paying a premium, while at the same time the common people were charged for making a similar use of them. His conclusion was that of the common herd, that the Bank had sought to corrupt the representatives of the people. Friends of the Bank could not deny that the Bank did accommodate Congressmen as Blair charged, but that it was done merely for their convenience. Blair pointed out that the use of bank drafts for currency was a violation of its charter.[25] He did not explain that these drafts were almost the sole currency in many Western communities, were not illegal, and were all redeemed. He accused Clay of seeking to make the Bank an issue in the presidential campaign of 1832, and worse still, he persuaded the President and the enemies of the Bank to believe that Biddle had used part of the funds of the Bank to influence the election of 1824 in favor of Adams. Although he could never find proof for such charges, and although Biddle was innocent of the charge of misusing the funds in the election, Blair's insinuations had the desired effect.

Blair ferreted out other damaging evidence against the Bank. The practice of charging interest on the day of the date and day of payment of a note was usury. That practice took two millions out of the pockets of the debtors, put it into the hands of the prerogatived class of stockholders who sought to perpetuate their offices and the Bank, and legally forfeited the charter. The aristocrats, the managers of the Bank had, also, the presumption to lend one hundred thousand dollars to Cincinnati, Ohio, for a term of forty years when they knew the Bank had only five years to live! Was this charter to be perpetual? There was no way to force a change in the management. If monied aristocrats and mercantile interests had to have a Bank government, why should it be hereditary? Allow cities, states, corporations, and thousands of private citizens to become indebted to this hereditary and perpetual institution, and would it not become as absolute master of the people of America as the autocrat of Russia is of the Cossacks?[26]

[25] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 588; the *Globe*, July 12, 16, Oct. 6, 1831.
[26] The *Globe*, Sept. 21, Oct. 8, 1831.

Biddle at last knew that the President opposed the Bank as it was organized. Earlier, he had confessed his belief that the attack on the Bank was harmless (January 18, 1830);[27] he had opposed the taking of any chance to allow Jackson to veto a bill for recharter (December 14, 1830);[28] now he had decided that the President wished to destroy the Bank (January 15, 1831); and he had almost determined to fight for the existence of the institution by February 17, 1831. He became utterly at sea as to the President's position by March 23, 1831, but had new hope when the President's Cabinet fell to pieces because of the Eaton scandal in April and May. Then he began to rely on Livingston and McLane to influence Jackson in favor of the renewal of the charter, and finally became suspicious and distrustful when McLane failed to win the President to the Bank as organized. In this vacillating frame of mind, he listened to the National Republicans who wanted an issue for the coming campaign.

Still dubious as to what course to pursue, he sent his trusted agent, Cadwalader, to Washington to survey the situation. In opposition to the advice of the Secretary of the Treasury and Adams, Cadwalader accepted Clay's opinion and McDuffie's advice, and turned to the Whig plan which was immediate application without compromise with the Blair-Kendall-Benton group. After receiving a chilly letter from McLane, Biddle went to Washington, but Clay and Webster vetoed any compromises. The die was cast. Let the President veto the bill for recharter if he dared! The Bank could take its case to the people. On January 9, 1832, the bill for recharter was introduced in both Houses.[29] If the hesitating President dared to veto the bill, Clay and Webster proposed to crush him at the polls.

The hostile Congressional committee which investigated the affairs of the Bank furnished Blair with damaging invectives. Understanding men could laugh at Clayton's silly report and pity him, but Jackson was at last convinced that there was something against the institution. The people knew less about principles of finance than the Congressmen who compiled the report. Blair buckled on his sword and armor to go into battle as never before.

[27] *Biddle Correspondence*, 96-97.
[28] Catterall, *op. cit.*, 207. Biddle to Joseph Hemphill, Dec. 14, 1830.
[29] Catterall, *op. cit.*, 223.

He lauded the Committee on Investigation, eulogized Jackson, damned Biddle, Clay, and Webster, and asked the people if they were not ready to decide on a thing which so vitally touched their interests.[30]

Could not the people see that the Bank ever had its able counsel in such men as Clay and Webster? It had money to pay handsomely even up to one hundred dollars for eight words from Webster's pen. It seemed to have able counsel to sanction the spurious issue of Bank checks for notes, to make presents of railroad stock, to silence the voice of indignation in pillaged cities, and to buy the press. With a review of the first Bank of the United States in which he explained how it had broken the Bank of Kentucky, and of his personal experience with the then-existing Bank, Blair told the West that the Bank at Philadelphia was to the currency system what the human heart was to the body. Let the managers decide to contract, and the states of the West were at its mercy. There was no guarantee that such a thing might not happen.[31]

The *National Intelligencer* defended its friends in a dignified manner. It opposed the idea of investigation of the affairs of the Bank. Blair retorted: "It is the *transactions of the Bank,* which ought to be exposed." Affairs of private citizens will be exposed, suggested Gales. True, but "what have *honest* printers or honest lawyers to fear from the exposure of their connections with the Bank?" asked Blair. Turning fiercely upon the editor of the *"Bank Gazette,"* Blair accused him of unblushingly vindicating the shameful and most flagrant bribery and corruption practiced by the Bank on the public press. Even the conservative Niles' *Weekly Register* did not escape the charge that it was a bought press. Niles quietly remarked that Blair did it on flimsy foundations and showed poor virtue of courage.[32]

The year of 1832 had two thrilling events for Blair: the veto of the bill for the recharter of the Bank and the election of Jackson. Blair was one of three men who approached Taney on the subject of taking McLane's place,[33] and when the veto message was given

[30] Catterall, *op. cit.,* 230; the *Globe,* Jan. to July of 1832.
[31] The *Globe,* May 7, June 6, 1832.
[32] The *Globe,* Apr. 18, May 7, Oct. 13, 1832.
[33] Bernard Christian Steiner, *Life of Roger Brooke Taney, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court* (Baltimore, 1922), 124-25.

to Congress it went as a composite work of Jackson, Livingston, Taney, Kendall, Blair, and Lewis. The document was an appeal to the people. Many of its sentences could have been gleaned from the *Globe*. "I am delighted with it," wrote Biddle. "It has all the fury of the unchained panther, biting the bars of his cage." [34] Clay's paper, the *Lexington Observer,* denounced it as a "mixture of the Demagogue and the Despot, of depravity, desperation and feelings of malice and vengeance partially smothered." The Bank published and distributed the veto message in English and German—using it as a campaign document.[35] The *Globe* described it as the "crowning chaplet of an immortal fame." [36]

Blair, with Kendall's aid, ran leaders in the *Globe* defending Jackson's veto of the Bank, and at the same time, appealing to the people to defeat the Bank-Clay party. The committee report on the Bank was dwelt upon, used bit by bit, and made into effective political propaganda. The people were constantly reminded that foreigners owned millions of dollars' worth of bank-stock. Was it right to vote money into the coffers of the enemies of liberty in Great Britain? The rich aristocratic nobility had come into competition with honest liberty-loving republicans. The Bank had lavished its favors on its friends in Congress. Some were stockholders; some were "feed lawyers"; and among the latter were Clay and Webster.[37]

Coalition and Nullification came in for a good share of Blair's campaign propaganda. He forced the coalitionists into open battle against Jackson. Kendall glided in and out of the *Globe* office with copy, and Blair wrote furiously, stimulatingly, even eloquently. His audience grew and subscriptions to his paper and the "Extra" multiplied as the campaign advanced. He wrote short editorials for the common man, but Kendall supplied long, argumentative articles for those who wanted that type of literature. Personalities entered into the fight; Green, Calhoun, "Nick" Biddle, Clay, Webster, and "Joseph Surface" Gales, each felt the sting, sarcasm, and scorn of the transplanted Kentuckian, Blair. Articles were sent to country editors for publication as

[34] *Biddle Correspondence, op. cit.,* 196. Biddle to Clay, Aug. 1, 1832.
[35] *Ibid., op. cit.,* 197.
[36] The *Globe,* July 14, 1832.
[37] *Ibid.,* July 23, 1832.

their very own. Public opinion was created, directed, and controlled.[38]

The *Globe* carried a fervent appeal to its readers: Elect Andrew Jackson, the hero who stood for "everything that is pure in our government." Down with coalitions, factions, the "author of nullification," the "Holy Alliance" of Clay and the Bank. Let the people send Congressmen to the capital city who would not spend "sleepless nights and anxious days in devising means to array against the President all the selfish, avaricious, corrupt and corrupting influences which pervade the Republic." A band of political managers hoped to vanquish the conqueror of Europe's bravest armies, and close in obloquy and disgrace, the public career of him who had filled the measure of his country's glory.

Blair had psychology on his side. He was charging a supposed hydra of corruption that antagonized the popular hero of New Orleans. The people desired to have their government in honest hands, he told them. Be on guard against deception; get correct information in relation to the administration. To help the people do that he issued an *Extra Globe* throughout the campaign at the low cost of one dollar a subscription. It was chiefly devoted to the vindication of the character, fame, and principles of Andrew Jackson.[39] Kendall and Barry distributed the *Extras;* friends passed them about; and the opposition wailed against them in vain.[40]

Blair summed up the accomplishments of the coalition of Clay, Calhoun, and the Bank for his subscribers thus: It had done nothing constructive; it had prevented Van Buren from going to England; it had suspended a multitude of appointments to embarrass the public business; it had only wasted time for the people for its record. The question before the people was one of power between Nicholas Biddle and the people. Let there be a "restoration of equal rights, equal protection to all, a return to constitutional principle and a perpetuation of our happy Union,"—a "Second Declaration of Independence."

[38] The *Globe,* July to Oct., 1832; Bowers, *op. cit.,* 242-45.
[39] The *Globe,* Apr. 10, 1832.
[40] The Cincinnati *Daily Gazette,* Mar. 1, July 31, Sept. 4, 1832, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Jackson and Van Buren defeated their opponents by a popular vote of 687,502 to 530,189. Jackson's electoral vote equaled 219; Clay had 49. Niles commented thus: "Two great questions would seem to be settled by this election: the right of congress to appropriate money for *internal improvements* is generally denied—and the unconstitutionality and inexpediency of a *bank of the United States,*" is affirmed.[41]

Other things which were vital to Blair were settled for four years: The *Globe* was the official organ; Jackson was to be there to protect its editor; the policy of the *Globe* was fixed; and Blair was to be ever ready to respond when Jackson exclaimed: "Send it to Bla-ar."

[41] *Niles' Register,* Nov. 17, 1832.

CHAPTER X

Settling Down in Washington

Where can one be happier than in the bosom of his family.
—Proverb.

Blair arrived in Washington in 1830, accompanied by his family and Mrs. Gratz. He left his plantation and a few slaves in the care of a tenant under the general oversight of Gratz.[1] It is quite easily understood why the Blair family went with Blair to Washington. Blair was particularly fond of his wife and children and spent an unusual amount of his time in the companionship of his capable and lovable helpmate, who kept an ever-watchful eye on his health. Mrs. Blair's constant care for his physical welfare aided him in the development of a strong constitution, helping overcome a tubercular tendency, and giving him an eighty-five year lease on life. This courageous daughter of Nathaniel Gist did not propose to be left behind to live on a farm in Kentucky while her husband sallied forth to defend Jackson. She was quiet, unassuming, intelligent, determined, and possessed the qualities which made her equal to facing hardships without a qualm. She was just the wife for a struggling Jacksonian editor.

The father and mother, husband and wife since 1812, left their eldest boy, Montgomery, with Gratz. Blair had greatly admired the Revolutionary hero, General Montgomery, and had sought to perpetuate the General's fame in the name of his son,[2] who was born May 10, 1813. By the time the elder Blair left Kentucky, Montgomery was a tall, straight, blue-eyed, fair-complexioned youth of seventeen years of age. He had received the best training obtainable in the schools in Frankfort county and had entered Transylvania University to finish his education. There he hoped

[1] Blair MSS. Benjamin Gratz to Blair, May 31, 1831; Benton, *op. cit.*, 130.
[2] Blair MSS., B. Gratz to Blair, May 31, 1831; Major Gist Blair, "Annals of Silver Spring," in *Records* of the Columbia Historical Society, XXI (1918), 155-185.

to fit himself for a career in the world. Soon after the Blair family was settled in Washington, and the father had won the respect and confidence of Jackson, the latter insisted that Montgomery be appointed to West Point. The boy refused to consider his father's entreaties to quit Transylvania, but when Jackson insisted, Montgomery decided to worship at the same shrine with his father. The doting old uncle, Benjamin Gratz, and the cultured, vivacious aunt, Mrs. Gratz, were forced to allow their youthful nephew, who had won his way into their hearts and become their only companion, to go away to get a scientific education to fit him better for the part he was to play in affairs of the world.[3]

Montgomery had "qualities for one of his years," wrote Gratz, but he thought that the two boys would require the strict attention of their mother's eye. Blair had three boys and a daughter, Elizabeth. Gratz must have referred to Montgomery and James, for James was the third child, Elizabeth having preceded him. James became a sailor and was the happy subject of many a comment which passed between Blair and Jackson. Elizabeth, no doubt, enjoyed playing with the Donelson children at the White House. Her father was a daily visitor there, and the President insisted upon her living at the White House when Blair first purchased the Lovell home across the Avenue. The President feared that a damp cellar beneath the new Blair home might cause Betty to be overcome with some kind of fever. He loved her as if she were his own child. Many times Betty winced from the pain caused by a sudden clutch at her long hair while the absent-minded President was stroking her head during a conversation about matters of state or politics.[4]

The youngest of the Blair children was Frank, named for his father and born at Lexington, Kentucky, February 19, 1821. Frank was a mere child when he was taken to Washington. Montgomery had grown up amidst the trying scenes of political controversy between the relief and anti-relief, and old and new court factions. He had been baptized in the political turmoil of the frontier. Not so with Frank. As a boy he had the qualities which augured an

[3] Augustus C. Rogers (ed.), *Sketches of Representative Men North and South* (New York, 1874), 87; Jesse Frederick Essary, *Maryland in National Politics* (Baltimore, 1915), 223; Blair MSS., B. Gratz to Blair, May 31, 1831; Clay, *op. cit.*, 187-199.

[4] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, July 30, 1836, Dec. 22, 1844.

affable, ardent, and impetuous man in the future He was a favorite at the President's mansion and with the boys at school. He excelled nearly all his schoolmates in athletics, knew his lessons, was seldom seen studying, and gave his teacher much concern about his mischievous pranks. "Frank gives me more trouble than all the other scholars combined," said his schoolmaster, Mr. Smith, who believed in strict discipline. Frank gave a nickname to each boy and made it stick. Among his playmates were the Van Buren boys, Mansfield Lovell, John Barclay, and William Van Ness Bay, who in later years wrote a short biography of Frank. It is said that, regardless of the man's mission, callers at the Blair home were forced to wait if Blair and his little son Frank were enjoying a romp or a political discussion.[5]

The Blair family was in no position to be received into the upper circles of society when it reached Washington. Jacksonians had been long enough at the capital to establish for themselves a democratic social circle, but the dignified set of the Adams régime was still much alive. Blair soon fell heir to Calhoun's wrath, and presumably to the cool scorn of Mrs. Calhoun. The Eaton scandal which disrupted Washington society in 1831 finally drew the *Globe* and Blair into a nasty pen battle with Branch, Berrien, and Ingham. Mrs. Seaton and Mrs. Gales, long established in the upper circles of society, could hardly afford to welcome the newcomers from Kentucky The *Globe* was soon a thorn to Gales and Seaton. There were, however, many gentlemen and ladies in Washington. Coaches were becoming common; the city was growing rapidly; and society was changing. Van Buren, Benton, Lewis, Donelson, Kendall, and Barry, with many others, welcomed the Blairs, and the President took them to his heart immediately.[6]

Blair wrote amusing and entertaining letters to Mrs. Gratz about the early experiences of his family in Washington. The Blairs took up board and lodging first with Parson Brown where they were disappointed in their hostess, with whom they had "much difficulty to make fair weather." Soon, however, she became a friend full of kindness and civility to them. A fine room

[5] William Van Ness Bay, *Reminiscences of the Bench and Bar of Missouri* (St. Louis, 1878), 394; Appleton's, *op. cit.;* McCabe, *op. cit.,* 299-300.

[6] Parton, *op. cit.,* III, ch. 26; Nicolay, *op. cit.,* ch. 11.

which looked extremely well was rented, but it proved intolerably smoky. Thereupon Blair engaged a parlor and two comfortable bedrooms, furnished, from a Mr. Skinner, at eight hundred dollars a year. Although the Skinners were very obliging, the Blairs stayed only a little while with them, and moved to a boarding house which proved to be shockingly dirty. The food was so small in quantity and poor in quality that the family nearly starved. Blair humorously described his situation: "I bless the Irish potato, with his russet coat. The cracker that defies pollution, being made of such impenetrable stuff, is my bread. Rice, which shows like snow the various spots that have been soiled and enables me to avoid them, is my main living." This miserable fare had to be accepted until Congress closed its session (1831), at which time he declared he would move to Brown's tavern. Not until 1836 did Blair find it possible to purchase a suitable home. He consulted his friends about the advisability of buying the Decatur House on Lafayette Square. Van Buren advised him not to buy it for fear of arousing jealousy in the bosoms of friends; instead, he advised him to buy one or two of the vacant lots and build his house at his leisure. That procedure would break the matter more gradually upon the public. Blair must have taken Van Buren's advice in part, for he bought the Joseph Lovell home for $6,500. Lovell had been a surgeon-general in the army during the War of 1812. Very soon after his death (Oct. 17, 1836), Blair bought the home from the Lovell heirs. There was enough space in the lots to allow the Blairs to keep a cow, some horses, and later to sell a part of the land to Corcoran for an art gallery. The building erected by Corcoran is now the Court of Claims Building. The Lovell home, which was built about 1810, was enlarged, and in 1855 was given to Montgomery who, again, enlarged the building until it became the spacious, attractive and elegant old mansion at 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue. It is now owned by Major Gist Blair, a son of Montgomery Blair. The building is one of a few historic edifices left around or near Lafayette Square to remind us of Jackson's and Lincoln's administrations.[7]

[7] Edward Winslow Martin, *Behind the Scenes in Washington* (New York, 1873), 73; Clay, *op. cit.;* Blair MSS., Van Buren to Blair, Oct. 15, 1836; The *Globe,* Dec. 24, 1839; Information through a conversation between the author and Major Gist Blair.

Blair soon found it necessary to take part in the social affairs which were inseparably a part of the presidency and high officialdom. Though he had moved in the social and political circles at Frankfort, adjustment to his new environment was necessary, for he found customs vastly different from what he was accustomed. He was invited to a party at Register Smith's, a relative of his, where entertainment was in the "highest style imaginable." The host told him to come at seven o'clock, and Blair promptly presented himself at the hour. To his chagrin and embarrassment he learned that when genteel folk said seven they meant eleven. Senators and representatives appeared about nine, Barry and Eaton about ten, and Van Buren and the English Minister to the United States entered at the stroke of eleven.[8]

At home, Mrs. Blair carefully watched Blair's diet. The doctors warned him to beware of his health, but he laughed at their fears. His wife accompanied him when he took his daily gallop on horseback into the country, for she enjoyed the open air and vigorous exercise as much as he. At each meal he drank an ordinary tumbler filled two fingers deep with rye whiskey. "Two fingers deep meant the standard measurement of Violet Gist Blair's slender, tapering fingers, not Blair's thick, chubby ones."

At Register Smith's, Blair found a well-prepared meal of delicious food. He wrote: "I behaved very well among the canvasback ducks, the turkeys without bones, the oysters and the quail. I made them all quail before me. I drank Rhenish and Flemish sherry and champagne, and discussed madeira whose *mark on the mouth* made it upwards of twenty years of age. I tried chocolate custards and jellies of all sorts, and a variety of things I could not find out after trying them. I beat Van Buren at *hucre* as Mr. Vaughn [English Minister] called it, and then out-joked his majesty's plenipo with admirable impudence. So much for wine." He believed Vaughn liked him; the Minister asked to become a subscriber to the *Globe;* Blair gave him a subscription free. The after effects were evident, for he says: "I came home this morning with a sad headache," "I must give up the *Globe* or the beau monde."

Blair's correspondence is silent on Washington society after he

[8] Clay, *op. cit.*, Blair to Mrs. Gratz, Dec. 18, 1830.

had passed a winter in the capital. His first winter was an introduction to politics, which made him weary, and to fashionable scenes, which convinced him that "there was never at any time or in any country such miserable parade labored through under the pretense of seeking pleasure." He observed it as a looker-on. Parties were shows of heartless ostentation where servants passed through a rabble with refreshments held aloft like the food before Tantalus, and men and women danced in a crowded space by jumping up and down like two fighting Kentuckians whom the crowd had closely encircled. As for me, he said, "let me dance with my big-footed Bensonians under a Fourth of July arbour" to "Crockett's music." And there was the beautiful and hospitable old Canewood, for which he longed, where lived Mrs. Blair's mother, now the second wife of General Charles Scott. She was a woman of strength and character; General Scott was a Revolutionary general to whom Jackson drank toasts, ex-governor of Kentucky, and the author of Blair's favorite expression: "The people when they got wrong, had to get damned wrong before they could get right."

Memories of the old homeland grew dimmer with passing months. Mrs. Scott died, and Mrs. Gratz came into possession of Canewood. Blair's father, long dependent upon his son for support, died in 1837; and new acquaintances in Washington gradually displaced those in Frankfort. Blair did not lose interest in the Kentuckians, nor did he fail to cherish early friendships, but it was human to concentrate his attention upon those things in which his interests and fortune were concerned.

Montgomery Blair graduated at West Point in 1836—a tall young man who had a soldierly poise of which he was proud to his dying day. He received an appointment as a lieutenant in the army to serve in the Seminole War. Though he had fitted himself for a military career, he decided that he would rather practice law. Acting upon this impulse, Montgomery resigned his commission in 1836, and with his young bride went back to Transylvania University to study law under the guidance of Thomas A. Marshall,[9] one of the famous Marshall family which has figured so

[9] Andrew A. Blair to William E. Smith, Nov. 27, 1923; The *Globe*, Jan. 23, 1844; Appleton's, *op. cit.;* Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Aug. 25, 1836.

prominently in American history. His lectures attracted no little notice at the law school. Marshall acted as professor of law from 1836 to 1848 and gave Frank Blair his first legal education after he had finished at Princeton in 1841.[10] While the elder Blair was censuring John Marshall for his decisions and his Federalism, the Blair boys were imbibing the spirit of law as another branch of the Marshall family interpreted it at Lexington.

Elizabeth Blair received her early education from a French tutor whom Blair described as being a man of letters and sense. She found a warm spot in Jackson's heart, visited him very often, copied many of his letters and papers for him, and received from him as well as sent to him messages of love and respect when he was away from Washington. "Betty" sends her "love to you which I assure you is as fond as that ever felt for a parent," was one of Blair's messages to Jackson.[11]

So close to each other had the Blair family and Jackson become during the years 1832-36 that their happiest hours seemed to be spent in company with each other. For many an hour Jackson found in the Blair home peace and freedom from official duties. These inseparables traveled at Jackson's expense, and Blair and Betty made visits to the Hermitage. When Jackson departed from Washington, leaving behind him a deadly calm, an "absence of Government," as Gales called it, the void in the hearts of the Blairs made them sad and lonely, and they yearned for the Old Hero. "From my daily habit of going to see you," wrote Blair after Jackson had left Washington, "I am never easy till I pay a visit to your office."[12]

[10] Collins, *op. cit.*, II, 394; Bay, *op. cit.*, 394-401.

Thomas A. Marshall was a son of Humphrey Marshall. He served in Congress, 1831-35. He married a Miss Price of Lexington, who was a niece of Mrs. Henry Clay. Blair was related to the Marshalls.

[11] Clay, *op. cit.;* Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, May 26, 1837; Blair to Jackson, Feb. 11, 1838; Mar. 11, 1838; July 12, 1840.

[12] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, July 14, 1836; Jackson to Blair, (?), 1842; Blair to Jackson, Apr. 5, 1837; *Niles' Register,* XL, 26; The *Globe,* May 23, June 28, 1843.

CHAPTER XI

The *Congressional Globe*

The Congressional Globe is sold to Congress for less than the first edition of any book is sold for by any bookseller in the world.
—John C. Rives, 1856.

The publication of the *Congressional Globe* is one of Blair's chief contributions to American history. Blair and Rives as partners began its publication in 1834, continued it until 1849, and Rives and his sons then conducted its publication down to 1874.[1] Closely connected with the *Congressional Globe* was the ceaseless play for the public printing of Congress. The printing offered profits, while the *Congressional Globe* provided political propaganda to readers at low cost, provided textbooks for Congressmen, and furnished ready references for the presses which desired to obtain sets of the reports of the national legislature. The *Congressional Globe* became a formidable competitor of the *Register of Debates,* which was published by Gales and Seaton until 1837, when it was discontinued.

A political contest arose in Congress in February, 1833, over the election of a printer for the House of Representatives. Blair and Rives, Green, and Gales and Seaton were the principal contestants for the business. A long-drawn-out contest in which agreements were made, or understood, resulted in the election of Gales and Seaton, who had 99 votes to 94 for Blair and Rives. Adams records in his Memoirs that "a buzz of satisfaction went around the hall [House of Representatives] outside the bar," when the vote was taken. Then he complacently remarked: "I secured this election to Gales and S. by prevailing upon the Anti-Masons, 12 of whom had at first ballot voted for Thurlow Weed, to vote finally for them." The *Globe* said that the results were not surprising to it,

[1] Wilhelmus Bogart Bryan, *A History of the National Capital* (2 vols., New York, 1916), II, 409-414.

but would probably be to its friends abroad. The *Globe* justly branded it a victory for the opposition through a coalition of nullification and the friends of Clay. A similar defeat was meted out to the proprietors of the *Globe* in the election of a printer to the Senate when Blair's friends found that he could not be elected and went over almost en masse to Green, thereby electing him. Thus the tariff and pro-Bank men united with the nullifiers to defeat Blair, Jackson's whip.[2]

The defeat of the administration organ in both Senate and the House of Representatives was strongly resented by the partisans of the President. Blair made a personal canvas of each friendly Congressman, asking him how he voted. The list was published with proofs satisfactory to the *Globe's* proprietors that Gales and Seaton had been illegally declared elected. Jackson denounced the election of Green and Gales as an attempt to use public money to abuse the President who had been recently overwhelmingly elected by the people.[3] Blair persistently accused Green of being an advertiser for the nullifiers who had turned the Senate into a debating society for the ranters, such as Calhoun, the "Southern Satyr," and the "Earl of Empty Barrels," his colleague from South Carolina. Their defeat as printers to Congress caused Blair and Rives to redouble their efforts to win a victory at the polls for the Democracy.

The *Congressional Globe* made its first appearance in the session of 1833-34. It was published once a week for the session of 1834-35 "on a *double royal* sheet made up in quarto form, at *one dollar* per copy during the session." Extra sheets were published when unusually good speeches were made, or important events took place in Congress. An index was made at the close of the session for the entire sessional reports and a copy was sent to each subscriber. A political appeal was made through the columns of the daily *Globe* to its readers to subscribe for the *Congressional Globe*. The editors contended that the approaching session of Congress would turn the halls of the national legislature into an arena in which the efforts of the coalition schemers to reach the presidency in 1836 would be met by the "friends of the cause of

[2] *Adams's Memoirs*, VIII, 525; The *Globe*, Feb. 16, 21, 22, 1833.
[3] The *Globe*, Dec. 13, 1833; *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 237, Jackson to Hardy M. Cryer, Feb. 20, 1833.

the Democracy—the bold and eloquent defenders of the rights of the People." They appealed to every Jacksonian to support them with a subscription. Similar appeals were repeated during the life of the *Globe*.[4]

The editors of the *Globe* promised to employ the best reporters in the United States to report the debates in Congress. To enable distant readers more fully to understand the reported proceedings, Blair undertook personally to report the proceedings of the House. This he did, as a thumbing of the pages of the *Globe* will show. His editorial analyses are usually of a partisan nature. In the daily proceedings of Congress which were published in the daily *Globe,* Blair had competition, and so did Rives after Blair retired in 1849. But after 1837 the *Globe* stood supreme and alone in the publication of sessional reports.[5]

The editor of the *Globe* did not revise the reports of debates. These reports were printed as the reporters or members of Congress turned the materials into the *Globe* office. In case errors were made by reporters or typesetters, the members of Congress could have them corrected by reading the *Globe* accounts and calling the errors which had crept into the reports to the attention of the editorial staff. The publication of speeches was often delayed pending revision by the authors. Sometimes speeches were written for publication after they had been delivered in Congress, and therefore the written versions sometimes differ greatly from the spoken versions. We are consequently denied a true record of congressional speeches when we turn to the reports in the appendix of the *Congressional Globe.* Gales and Seaton often omitted speeches and parts of proceedings, probably for partisan reasons, and to lighten the cost. The *Globe* had enough type to leave its daily reports set up until it printed its sessional reports. The cost of the *Congressional Globe* was consequently lessened. By 1841 Blair and Rives had accumulated three or four thousand surplus sets of *Congressional Globes.* Surplus sets enabled Rives profitably to continue the publication of the *Congressional Globe* and the daily *Globe* as a non-political paper after Blair retired from business. The surplus sets were sometimes sold for fifty cents each to subscribers of the *Congressional Globe.* There was

[4] The *Globe,* Nov. 8, 1834; Oct. 28, 1841; Nov. 2, 1843.
[5] *Ibid.;* Bryan, *op. cit.,* II, 409-14.

an *Appendix* which accompanied each volume of the *Congressional Globe* or for all the numbers of a session. The *Appendix* contained the President's annual message, reports of the principal officers of the national administration, and all the long speeches of Congressmen which they had written or revised. It was of the same form and about the size of the *Congressional Globe,* and sold for either a dollar or for fifty cents, according to the rates advertised.

Members of Congress could hardly do without the *Congressional Globe.* Congress subscribed to it at the nation's expense. Bennett of the New York *Herald* jealously accused the *Globe* of enjoying too much of the "fat and greasy" droppings of the Democracy. Blair thought the *Congressional Globe* was far more important than any state paper, presidential message, or newspaper, including the *Globe,* in the United States.

It was a great satisfaction to Blair and Rives when Gales and Seaton were defeated for printers to the House in the session of 1835-36. The Richmond *Whig* said it was a matter of course. James K. Polk of Tennessee was Speaker of the House, and Van Buren was the president of the Senate. When Blair received his 133 votes in the House to 59 for Gales he exultingly cried that it was the sign of a wave of popular opinion carrying the opposition down to defeat.

In 1835 the *Globe* regularly employed twenty-three journeymen printers and others with E. H. Kincaid for foreman. The editor wrote a long exposition to show that Gales and Seaton received $258,464.82 for printing in 1834, while the *Globe* received $15,510.22 for its job work for the departments. Democrats could see who had been making money, said Blair. The victory of the *Globe* was of short duration. The summer elections of 1837 went against Van Buren. The Independent Treasury bill was firmly pressed by the administration in an extra session. It passed the Senate 26 to 20, and met defeat in the House. Polk was elected speaker by the small majority of 13 votes. Blair and Rives suffered from the break in the Democratic ranks, and were defeated as printers to the House. About fifteen Democrats deserted the administration, and Allen of the Washington *Madisonian* was elected. Blair explained the defeat of the *Globe* as one which

came because he had unrelentingly stood for hard money and the patriotic principles for which the great body of the people fought. Van Buren did not have the strength to carry his party Congressmen with him.

The Whigs straightway charged Blair with corruption while acting as printer to the House. He immediately called for a congressional committee to investigate the records of the *Globe*. The Whigs did not wish to investigate it, but the insistence of Blair backed by the administration forced the investigations through. Blair and Rives were exonerated, but the committee inquired into the conduct of Gales and Seaton and found that those editors had used illegal type, illegal pages, and such other artifices as to enable them to make profits varying from three to a hundred per cent on different documents.[6]

Gales descended from his lofty dignity to pour out vials of wrath upon Blair as official editor. Congressman Davis of Kentucky said that Blair was a bankrupt in 1830, and that he was an adventurer who sought employment for the want of a home, an editor who had profited from the Treasury enough to accumulate two hundred thousand dollars, to ride in a gilt coach, and to buy expensive silver plate. Blair replied with an explanation of his financial condition and position in 1830. He ended by saying that his gilt coach, as every one acquainted with him in Washington knew, was a one-seated barouche with an ungilted gig top, and his silver plate existed in a flight of Davis's imagination.[7]

In January of 1840, Green, after having given up his *Telegraph* in 1837, made the startling statement that Blair and Rives had offered him ten thousand dollars for the use of his name in an attempt to secure the printership to Congress. In the same article, published in the *Madisonian,* Green said Gales and Seaton offered him eight per cent of the profits if they might use his name. It was a serious misunderstanding or a flight of the imagination on Green's part. True, Congressman Mitchell had written Green that it was believed that he could be elected. Blair and Rives published a signed editorial giving Green the lie. Green offered nothing in answer to the *Globe's* unequivocal denial, but he wrote Calhoun a petulant letter accusing him of desertion, conspiracy, and

[6] The *Globe,* June 25, 1838; Dec. 24, 1839. [7] *Ibid.,* Dec. 24, 1839.

downright unfairness. Calhoun had decided to allow the administration to elect its printer. In a spirited reply to Green's letter, Calhoun denied the charges which Green had brought against him. The *Globe* tried to prove that Gales and Seaton had approached Green, and the Whigs retaliated in the House with the declaration that the *Globe* was so full of falsifications that they could not try to rectify them. "After much altercation and chicanery," says J. Q. Adams, Blair and Rives received 110 votes to 92 for Gales and Seaton, and so became printers again.[8]

Blair and Rives were successful also in the election in the Senate. It was the custom for a dying session to elect a printer for the next one. W. P. Mangum, senator from North Carolina, had refused to have anything to do with the election of printer for the 26th Congress. When the 27th Congress convened, he joined hands with Clay to oust Blair and Rives as printers. They had signed the contract, prepared for the work ahead of them at considerable expense, and assumed that they were the legally recognized printers for the Senate. Clay attacked Blair personally and most viciously; he declared that the appointment of Blair and Rives by the old Senate was one of high-handed power, and proposed not to follow precedent. He felt sorry for Rives, who had fallen in bad company, but he would not stand for an attempt to throw cast-off clothes upon the new Congress. He would have none of this senior editor of the *Globe,* "who had stalked about on the floor of the Senate as if he were an officer of that body"; let Blair's friends go to the people and see where they stood. He declared that the new Senate was not obliged to recognize Blair as its printer. It should disconnect itself from this infamous, notoriously bad character who, more than anybody else, had injured his own party. Blair's bond should be returned to him.[9]

Adams had good reasons, although he sincerely disliked Blair, to call Clay's speech a fiery one. Clay's temper had got the best of him. Blair, with his stinging editorials, answered Clay, whom he called the "Senatorial Autocrat." He said Clay's speech in the Senate was the result of cold calculation—it was an attack upon

[8] *Ibid.,* Jan. 11, 16, 30, 1840; Mar. 16, 1841; *Correspondence of John C. Calhoun,* ed. by J. Franklin Jameson, in *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association, II (1899), 438-40; *Adams's Memoirs,* X, 441-42.

[9] The *Globe,* Mar. 16, 1841; *Niles' Register,* IX and X, 407.

the freedom of the press by a "criminal party seeking to undermine the public virtue, and prostitute our free and happy form of government to the lust of their vile ambition." [10]

Walker showed that the election of Blair and Rives was no more unconstitutional than the election of Gales and Seaton as printers to the Senate (1835) by the Clay-Webster-Mangum party. The Democrats had accepted their men. Where were the proofs and specification of infamy of character of Blair and Rives? Calhoun very surprisingly argued that the Senate had formed a contract with Blair and Rives, and to dismiss them would be a breach of contract. King of Alabama added that the Senate could hold the printers to their bond; why was not the Senate liable too? King and Silas Wright summed the situation up as a bad piece of party politics.[11]

Mangum introduced the resolution which resolved "that Blair and Rives be dismissed as Printers to the Senate for the 27th Congress." It carried 26 to 18, March 11, 1841. The Secretary of the Senate was instructed to secure the bond, and did so. Kendall used his pen freely in defense of the *Globe,* calling the action of the Senate one of vengeance, and in abrogation of a contract.[12] Regardless of what wrong was committed by the Congressmen, restored Federalism had sweet revenge upon the defeated Democracy.

Next, Blair was expelled from the floor of the Senate. He then took his corps of reporters to the gallery, where day by day they gathered news and gave to the American people that light which the luminous minds of the great men representing the Democratic party shed upon the dangerous measures of the Whigs. On this basis he asked for a reëlection to the office of printer to Congress in 1843. He was defeated in the Senate by Gales and Seaton, but he won by a majority of sixty-two votes in the House. The Tyler Democrats opposed the election of the *Globe,* and Tyler was much incensed at its success.

The editors of the *Globe* were happy over the election to the

[10] *Adams's Memoirs,* X, 441-42; The *Globe,* Mar. 16, 1841.

[11] The *Globe,* Mar. 16, 1841; R. H. Gillet, *The Life and Times of Silas Wright* (2 vols., Albany, 1874), II, 1084.

[12] John Bassett Moore, *The Works of James Buchanan Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1903), IV, 391; The *Globe,* Mar. 18, 1841; Kendall's *Expositor,* quoted in the *Globe,* Mar. 19, 1841.

House as printers. In January, 1844, Blair promised his readers to improve the appearance of his paper, and to furnish them with an annual index at the same old price. He indulged in the supposition that the *Globe* was not to be considered, thereafter, as a merely ephemeral thing. However, in less than six months, Blair had been forced to retire to Silver Spring. His career as printer to Congress and as editor of the daily *Globe* was ended.

CHAPTER XII

Jacksonian Politics

The nature of sovereign power is not to endure a rival—Tacitus.

I

The *Globe* reached the apogee of its influence during Jackson's second administration. The friends of the President felt confident of their power. President Jackson believed the majority of votes which was returned in his favor in the election of 1832 was a vindication of his course. Friends came closer together and closed their ranks to meet the enemy. The apparent and most dangerous foes of the administration were the Bank and the political coalition.

While still jubilant over the recent victory at the election, the *Globe* began its violent onslaughts against the Bank, Clay, Calhoun, and Adams. Blair feared and sincerely hated the Bank, detested Clay, abhorred Calhoun, and despised Adams. He poured vitriol upon each as freely as the sheets of his organ issued forth in its daily stream. He needed no aid. Bennett of the New York *Globe,* later of the New York *Herald,* besought Levi Woodbury to use his influence with Jackson to secure for him an associate editorship with Blair. "I should like such a position remarkably well," wrote Bennett. "It would suit my temper—my imagination —my tastes—my all—— I think I would add a good deal of reputation and patronage to the *Globe.*" [1] But Jackson and Blair preferred to keep the *Globe* to themselves.

The President and the editor conferred secretly on subjects of moment and policy. "After you left me last evening," runs a note to Blair; another states: "Your note was received & answer returned that you could get a message tonight if you would come

[1] Blair MSS., J. G. Bennett to Levi Woodbury, Dec. 4, 1832.

up"; and, "send up your confidential man, if you cannot come up in the morning" for the message and the veto on the land bill. Blair submitted articles to the President for approval. On one subject he writes: "I enclose you a proof sheet of an article that I think is called for," as he prepared to reply to Clay's speech in which Clay intimated that the administration was divided on the Bank issue. On the Van Buren question Blair wrote that he thought a bold and decisive course at that moment would settle it and remove every obstacle to success. Excerpts from newspapers were sent to the President to show the trend of attack on Van Buren,[2] and on many other subjects.

The two questions of first-rank importance were the Bank and succession, and each needed bold treatment. Blair approached the latter by renewing the old charge that Van Buren had been rejected for Minister to England by a triumvirate leadership of envious rivals who dreaded to face his preëminent popularity. And what had been the answer of the people? They had sent Van Buren to the vice-presidential chair by a large vote. Soon after this feeler, Blair answered an opposition editor who asserted that Van Buren could not be elected President because the office-holders opposed him. Blair agreed that the office-holders were against Van Buren. Nevertheless, the "People who carry elections" were not "office-holders nor office-hunters." Then the regular Lewis-Kendall-Blair tactics were employed and the *Globe* began to publish reports of Democratic meetings where Van Buren had been proposed for the next President. He was hailed as a sound and inflexible Democrat.

The Bank was handled unmercifully. As an ex-banker, Blair knew where to find weaknesses in the institution. He had studied the question for over a score of years and was the ablest experienced banker who enjoyed the close confidence of the President.

The pro-Bank papers were as busy as the *Globe* and its co-laborers. Gales and Seaton were elected printers to the House in February (1833) and Green secured the printing of the Senate. In a few weeks the *Globe* pronounced Green a nullifier who was in the pay of the Bank, accused the *National Gazette* of receiving $1,000 for the distribution of $30,000 to $40,000 worth of its

[2] Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Oct. 18 and Nov. 30, 1833; Jan. 7, 1834.

marked copies, and the *National Intelligencer* was asserted to have squandered over $100,000 of the people's money. Blair estimated the amount which Gales and Seaton had received for government printing to be in excess of $1,000,000. He argued that the people owned one-fifth of the Bank stock and that the *National Intelligencer* was an instrument of the Bank. Then why should the people not know of the business relations of the two concerned? He proposed to give the people the information—of course in the *Globe* way. After reviewing the history of Gales and his paper and his relations with the Bank, Blair published an explanation of Gales' financial obligations, thereby making public the fact that the Bank held a deed of trust which covered the "lot, buildings, printing establishment, presses, types, furniture, debts due, and debts to become due." Blair had one conclusion to present to his readers: since the Bank practically owned the *National Intelligencer,* the former could dole out the income of Gales and Seaton who were mere hirelings. The editors of the *Intelligencer* were challenged to point out the errors in Blair's charges. The limp reply of Gales and Seaton fell far short of convincing their partisan opponents that Blair had wronged them. They indirectly admitted the truth of indebtedness to the Bank, declaring at the same time that some one in the Bank at Philadelphia had committed a dishonorable breach of trust. Such a confession was a great victory for Blair and damaging to Clay's political strength. Other presses which supported the Bank were similarly denounced. It is reported that Jackson declared after the withdrawal of the deposits, that he would protect the morals of the people against the corrupted Bank presses.[3]

The measure which broke the back of the Bank was the removal of the deposits. It is difficult to place the responsibility on any one individual. Talk of removal began early in Jackson's second administration. The President was constantly in consultation with Blair, Kendall, and Taney.[4] Parton claims that the idea of ceasing to deposit the public funds with the Bank and transferring the funds to state banks occurred to the President during a conversation with Blair. "Biddle," said Blair, "is actually using

[3] Edward Channing, *A History of the United States* (6 vols., New York, 1909-26), V, 448.

[4] Bassett, *op. cit.,* II, 633; Parton, *op. cit.,* III, 500; Catterall, *op. cit.,* 288.

the people's money to frustrate the people's will. He is using the money of the government for the purpose of breaking down the government. If he had not the public money he could not do it." [5]

Jackson vehemently declared that Biddle should not have the use of the public funds. Then he sent Blair out to sound the opinions of their friends on the matter. Blair found several advisers of the President strongly opposed to removal. Upon reporting the results of his investigations Blair received the emphatic reply from Jackson: "Oh, my mind is made up on *that* matter. Biddle shan't have the public money to break down the public administration. It's settled. My mind's made up."

Duane was called to the Treasury to take the place of McLane, who was given Livingston's position as Secretary of State. Duane was mediocre in ability, obstinate, and refused to do Jackson's bidding. Kendall submitted a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury (McLane) in which he gave reasons for the removal of the deposits. These reasons were mainly political in nature. Jackson, thereupon, inquired of his Cabinet: (1) had anything happened to justify a recharter since the last session of Congress? (2) if so, what modifications should be made? (3) was the Bank faithful to its constitutional duties and reliable? (4) was a new bank advisable? (5) and what disposition with future deposits must be made? Jackson commented on his questions and indicated that he opposed future deposits with the Bank.[6]

Taney and Barry strongly opposed the Bank and the continuation of the deposits with it; Cass and Livingston were against the destruction of the Bank; Woodbury refused to commit himself, and McLane contended that the Bank was safe and that there was no need for removal of deposits. Before this time, Lewis had visited Blair's home and conversed with Blair upon the subject of the removal of the deposits (February, 1833). "Mr. Blair," said Lewis, "maintained most vehemently that the damned bank ought to be put down, and the only effectual way of doing it was to take from it the whole of the public money; if it were allowed to retain that, he said, it would undoubtedly be re-chartered."

[5] Parton, *op. cit.*, II, 500.

[6] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, ch. 29.

Lewis inquired how the deposits could help obtain a charter. " 'Why,' " said Blair, " 'by corrupting the members of Congress; it would have the means of buying up half the members, and would do it unless the public funds were taken from it.' " Lewis opposed removal, and suggested that Van Buren, too, would object. Blair believed Van Buren would be in favor of removal, but upon hurrying over to see Van Buren, he found the wily politician in the opposition camp.[7]

Blair was "disappointed and mortified," says Lewis, "at finding Mr. Van Buren opposed to this favorite scheme of his, yet it did not dampen his ardor in the least. It was his theme by day and by night, talking to all his friends that would listen to him, and urging it as absolutely necessary to prevent the bank from getting its charter renewed. It was useless to tell him that the President could prevent that, at any time, by the use of the veto power. The reply was that it would be carried over his veto! He let no opportunity slip of arousing the fears of the President, and exciting his feelings against the bank; and in this he was aided by Mr. Kendall and Mr. Reuben M. Whitney." [8]

Although not a cabinet member, Blair submitted a memorandum on the Treasurer's report on the Bank. He condemned the Bank and opposed its recharter on any terms. He could not understand how the power to coin money and regulate the value thereof could be converted into a power to create a bank. Had not the people elected the President to carry out the principles set forth in the veto message? [9]

The *Globe* avowed its faith in the state banks as safe places of deposit. The pro-Bank papers were engaged in hot criminations and recriminations against the *Globe* and its friends. "Stockjobber," cried Gales at Blair. "Hireling," snapped Blair at Gales. The *Globe* offered seven reasons why the deposits should be removed. The seven were conspiracy on the part of the Bank with traitors, corruption of the press, influencing elections with Bank money, concealment of large and perilous loans from government officials, refusal to pay over the public deposit, lack of prudence

[7] *Ibid.;* Parton, *op. cit.,* III, 503-504.
[8] Parton, *op. cit.,* III, 505.
[9] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, n.d.

and integrity in the management of the Bank, and last, but not least, the imminent expiration of the Bank charter. The country needed a new system in operation before the old died.[10]

Kendall was sent north to feel out the state banks as to whether or not they would accept the deposits. The *Globe* assured its readers that no definite decision had been reached, July 25, 1833. Van Buren was opposed to the removal, though he was acquiescent in Jackson's wishes. He hoped to see the matter settled before the election of 1836. After a northern tour during which he was popularly lauded, Jackson went with the Blair family to the Rip Raps in Hampton Roads to recuperate. Kendall wrote to him that the state banks were hesitant about the assumption of the responsibility of becoming depositories. Blair's morale broke for a day, for he was overcome with the fear that the Bank was stronger than the government. Jackson reassured him that Biddle had given up, that the Bank was on its last peg, that the deposits would be removed.[11]

Roger B. Taney, a former Federalist and Maryland lawyer, was chosen to succeed the intractable Duane, who was ignominiously dismissed. Taney was a director of the Baltimore Branch Bank, but that did not deter him in his course of destroying the entire institution. The President had presented a paper to the Cabinet, September 18, 1833, which he and Blair had composed at the Rip Raps. Many of its passages could have been taken from the *Globe*. Taney changed it from a combative bulletin to a presentable state paper. The Bank was inevitably doomed to destruction when the withdrawal of public funds began. It was forced to adopt a policy of contraction to meet its obligations. The panic of 1833-34 followed, and the President resented Biddle's action in calling loans as an unnecessary thrust at the chief magistrate. The *Globe* continued to attribute all the ills of the country to Biddle's policy and to the action of his friends. The Bank president, at last broken, resorted to questionable methods to prolong the life of his institution, thereby making himself and his friends a target

[10] The *Globe*, July 11, 25, Aug. 2, 9, 1833; *National Intelligencer*, July 26, Aug. 6, 1833.

[11] The *Globe*, July 25, 1833; Bassett, *op. cit.*, ch. 29; Catterall, *op. cit.*, 293; Van Buren MSS., Van Buren to Blair, Oct. 15, 1845.

for effective attacks from the *Globe*.[12] Van Buren was saved from a break with his friends in the North, and Blair remained Jackson's favorite.

2

A delineation of the part played by Blair and the *Globe* during Jackson's second administration would require a detailed story of the period. It was Blair's duty to protect, defend, and denounce. As has been indicated, he did more; he necessarily had to assume, and often suggest. Jackson's confidence in Blair's ability and his esteem for him gave Blair a peculiar place in official circles and in the history of the country.

Until the day of his death Blair believed himself to be a constitutionalist. Consequently, when the South Carolinians passed their ordinance of secession, the whole subject of secession became repulsive to him. Its connection with Calhoun and McDuffie, who were objects of hatred to partisan Jacksonians, gave the loyal, constitutionalist Blair added incentive to unite unionist forces into a solid phalanx against disunionism.

When Vandeventer sent a copy of the ordinance to Blair to be published in the *Globe,* Blair immediately sent it to the President. The editor soon afterwards ran up to the White House to see Jackson, and found him busily writing the famous proclamation on nullification. The two men went over the document, and then it was handed to Secretary Livingston to be revised. Jackson did not approve of Livingston's conclusion, but that was countenanced in the hurry to have the proclamation published. Blair wrote an editorial exposition on the proclamation. The President thought that Blair could in the columns of the *Globe* explain away statements which might be misunderstood by the people.[13]

The Virginians reacted toward the President's manifesto with fear for their principles of state rights, and elected Tyler to succeed Tazewell in the Senate. This was serious, for Tyler was an enemy to Jackson. Calhoun must have been cheered more by this

[12] Catterall, *op. cit.,* chs. 12 and 13; Channing, *op. cit.,* V, 450; *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren,* ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, in *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association, II (1918), 601-608.

[13] Samuel Tyler, *Memoir of Roger Brooke Taney, LL.D.* (Baltimore, 1872), 188.

action than he was when the *Enquirer* praised all of his principles in his first pronouncement (1831) except the right of a state to interpose. Jackson could not understand how any one with common sense could believe in the absurdity that a faction of any state, or a state, had the right to secede and destroy the Union, or nullify its laws. He determined to save the Union or perish with it.[14]

The *Globe* offered its good offices in the form of ridicule, condemnation, explanations, and constitutional interpretations. Its "nullification Dictionary" came out January 3, 1833, and its exposition of the proclamation, with Jackson's full approval, appeared the next day. Blair denied the accusation of the nullifiers that Jackson's message and proclamation were inconsistent. He discussed the points in each document which had been misconstrued, set forth the recommendations of the President, and asked if they were not genuine, practical, state-rights doctrines. A review of the President's policy showed him to be standing for the principles which the South wanted carried out. "He expressly says," said Blair, "the reserved rights of the States are *Not Less Sacred,* than those which are delegated to the General Government."[15]

What was the position of the states in the federal system? According to Blair, Jackson believed "we live under two *distinct, separate, independent,* and *limited* governments. . . . Each of these Governments has its powers, which, without usurpation on the one side or the other, can never come in conflict. If the General Government attempts to exercise no powers other than those which are plainly delegated, and the States none which are not *clearly reserved,* there can never be a conflict between them. To one the people owe allegiance to the extent of the powers *delegated* to it.—To both the allegiance is equal in degree. They may be guilty of treason to the States severally and to the United States." Remedies against usurpation of powers on the part of the National State could be had through amendment, legislation, elections, and war. There was an absurd opinion abroad that we had two unlimited governments. The fathers had made two independent governments of reserved, limited, and delegated pow-

[14] *American Historical Magazine,* IV, 236. [15] The *Globe,* Jan. 4, 1833.

ers. "If each keeps within the limit of its powers, there can be no conflict between them any more than between two nations." State and national governments were each equally independent, and equally sovereign. In pointing out these principles, the President had used his messages to show their proper application and his proclamation to assert them.

Blair took his stand on the principles enunciated in his editorial on the proclamation. When Clay and Calhoun allied themselves to try to defeat the Democracy, Blair met them more than half-way with his strictures. The ambitious junto of South Carolina, which based its principles on sectional prejudices, and the Clay-Bank-Adams party received a large proportion of Blair's editorial space during the whole of the Jacksonian epoch. Jackson advised him to give no quarter, make no compromises on principles, and fight for the people.

3

While the Bank and nullification received the greater proportion of editorial space in the *Globe,* other questions of importance shared in public recognition. The subject of the disposal of public lands was given much attention. Blair agreed with Benton in that the proceeds arising from the sale of public lands should not be proportionally distributed among the several states. The income from land sales was not needed to pay the public debt, since that was rapidly extinguished (1833). He wanted to allow the western states to profit by the sale of lands at a nominal price to encourage emigration. Prosperity would be greatly increased through the settlement of easterners and foreigners on new soil. This policy, claimed Blair, was quite opposite of that pursued by a few statesmen who held a narrow, unpatriotic and selfish feeling of jealousy toward the growing West. The *Globe* published a series of long articles to prove the unjustness of Clay's land bill of 1833. This bill provided for a distribution of the proceeds accruing from the sale of public lands. Clay's bill was rejected by Jackson, who proposed a graduated scale price system of sales. This plan Benton introduced in the Senate. The subject became involved in politics, to Blair's disgust, and finally ended by the opposition forcing an unwelcome bill upon the President in 1836.

The public land question was given fewer discussions by Blair than the growing abolition movement. Abolitionism had much to do with his political fortunes. In 1833 there appeared in the *Globe* long editorials in which McDuffie and Calhoun were severely taken to task for their attempts to stir up the Southern slave-owners against the North. Blair accused them of seeking to use abolition as an issue by which they might build up a Southern confederacy for their selfish aims, and if they failed in the nullification of the laws of the United States, they would terrorize the South into secession to save its peculiar institutions. McDuffie's comparison of the two sections was shown to be dependent on prejudicial differences of an artificial type. Blair believed that both sections were dependent upon each other. "The interest of the South is amity with the North," he said. On the other hand, he thought that the North could best profit by keeping slavery where it was because of advantages arising from diversified interests and Southern markets.[16]

It was politically expedient to scorn the activities of abolition societies during the contest with Calhoun, McDuffie, Hayne, and Hamilton. Blair maintained then, and long afterwards, that Calhoun and his supporters realized that they were defeated in their use of the tariff for a war cry and turned to new, counterfeit terrors to agitate the South. Though he disliked the Colonization Society and abhorred the abolition societies as busy-bodies, Blair assured the South that they were harmless. Furthermore, "no society of men," he declared, "no State Legislature—no party in Congress—nor do we believe that any individual member, or any individual citizen of any respectability, has ever suggested the idea that there was any power in the General Government, or in any other government except that of the States interested, to act in any way upon the question of emancipation." [17]

Blair held steadfastly to the theory that the North did not want emancipation during the thirties and early forties. The North needed the raw products of the South which could be produced only by cheap slave labor in the South, he thought. His argument was at the same time honest and politic. Any attempts on the part of the opposition press to excite the feelings of the South

[16] The *Globe*, Apr. 5, 24, 1833. [17] *Ibid.*, June 10, 1833; Apr. 26, 1836.

on the slavery question were promptly recognized and arguments in refutation were offered through the *Globe*. The *Telegraph*, the New York *Courier and Enquirer*, the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, Garrison's *Liberator*, and the Richmond *Whig* were each excoriated when their editors offered provoking editorials. Blair's task was to defend the Union, furnish campaign literature for 1836, flay and ruin Calhoun and McDuffie, denounce Adams for introducing petitions in Congress, and enshrine the President in the hearts of the people as a protector of liberty, defender of private property, and savior of the Constitution.[18]

The important subject of Texas which arose during Jackson's second term came to play an important rôle in Blair's political career. Blair avoided the question until he was driven to defend Jackson and the policy of the administration. The heroic struggles of the little band of Anglo-Saxons in Texas who fought for their independence under the leadership of Sam Houston aroused great interest in the United States.

Jackson would have welcomed Texas as a valuable addition to the United States and as a protection against foreign aggressions. The slavery question did not influence him in favor of possessing Texas. He set his mind firmly against any act of bribery on the part of our government to obtain Texas, but he allowed the *Globe* to fulminate at what it termed enormous outrages against our territory, property and citizens. The question became involved in the political situation, and to avoid embarrassing Van Buren in his race for the succession and other complications, Jackson refused to annex Texas, and to recognize even Texan independence until near the close of his second term.

4

Friends of Jackson and Van Buren began the campaign to elect Van Buren in 1831. The "Succession" had a tortuous course to follow. In 1834 the *Globe* openly suggested Van Buren for the succession, but gave little space to the subject. By 1835 the campaign was opened in earnest. It was characterized by aggressive attacks on the opposition, the advocacy of Jackson's principles and the necessity of their continuance through the election of his

[18] *Ibid.*, June 10, 1833; Apr. 8, July 10, Aug. 30, Sept. 5, 14, 1833.

choice, and the defense of Van Buren while he remained somewhat in the background. The *Globe* professed a willingness to abide by the choice of the people. Its editorials and general policy kept Van Buren before the people as a true Democrat of Jackson's type, though he was not given first place in the editorial columns.

John Bell and Hugh White of Tennessee were particular objects for condemnation when the latter sought the presidency. The relations and the animosity which developed between Blair and Jackson on one hand, and White and Bell on the other, is a long, weary story of complicated politics. The *Globe* charged White with rallying the forces of bankism, nullification, and anti-Jacksonism, to his cause to secure the nomination. It appealed to all true republicans to rally under the flag of Van Burenism, the motto of which was declared to be, "Principles are everything; men, nothing."

The "ambitious Webster" was contrasted with the "candid, earnest, noble Benton," who refused the nomination for the vice-presidency. Harmony within the Republican party was Blair's cry. Hard money, the right of a state to instruct its representatives, cheap lands, expunging of the resolution which censured Jackson for his removal of the deposits, suppression of abolitionism, support of deposit banks and state banks, and a firm policy toward France were the issues as the *Globe* saw them. The admission of Arkansas and Michigan was especially desired, since as Democratic-Republican states they would become factors in the election of Van Buren.

Capital was made out of Tyler's committee report which showed fifty-two members of Congress as borrowers of the Bank. One alone had borrowed the astounding sum of $53,180 in 1832! The big issue was the Bank. The specie circular had to be defended, the panic scare utilized, and overspeculation explained. Right of suffrage was reaffirmed, election of judges declared advisable, and Federal Forgery and Federal Tactics graced the heads of the columns of the *Globe*.[19]

Jackson had come to rely on Blair. If the President had one sheet of paper while at the Hermitage, he used it to write to Blair

[19] The *Globe*, Mar. 13, 1835; Aug. 29, Oct. 1, 11, 13, 22, 27, Sept. 1, 27, 28, Nov. 11, 1836.

and asked him to carry greetings to Kendall, Taney, and Earle. His blessings were upon the Blair family.[20] If Blair adopted a policy without consulting Jackson, the latter approved it.[21]

The Whigs and White were not equal to Jackson's influence for Van Buren. The *Globe* hung its opprobrium of abolition onto Harrison, of rebel and ingratitude onto White, and of madness onto Calhoun. Poor Calhoun, exclaimed Blair, "his political disappointment corrodes his heart, while extravagant ambition still inflames his mind." Bennett, Noah, and Green, all early Jacksonian editors, were read out of the Republican fold. And Whig Congressmen were shown to have degraded themselves in becoming time-killers through their flagrant abuse of dilatory tactics to embarrass the administration.

The election was a triumph for Jackson's principles. Van Buren had 170 electoral votes to his credit, while his opponents, Harrison, White, and Webster, had 73, 26, and 14, respectively. The Senate was called upon to elect a vice-president. Voting *viva voce,* by its own prescribed manner, it elected Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky. The election was a consummation of Jackson's most cherished hopes.

As a result of the election, the *Globe* had a lease of life for another four years.

[20] Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Aug. 30, Sept. 6, 1834.
[21] *Ibid.,* Jackson to Blair, May 20, Oct. 22, 1835; Aug. 22, 1836.

CHAPTER XIII

Blair and Van Buren

Supremacy of the Laws and the Constitution.
—The Globe, May 19, 1837.

I

Van Buren's inaugural ball was held on the eve of Jackson's departure for Tennessee. The *Globe* described the ball as being graced with more loveliness and beauty than was ever seen before in the city of Washington. "Not a circumstance occurred to clash, for a moment, the general joy, nor any of its pleasant associations." Jackson attended the first of the few presidential levees held by Van Buren and had the supreme satisfaction of receiving the greetings of the thousands who paid their respects to the new President.[1]

The relief from the cares of office and the triumph of his principles exemplified in the voice of the people at the presidential election served as a momentarily exhilarating tonic to Jackson. He showed it in his alacrity and gaiety of spirit when he departed for the Hermitage on March 18, 1837, accompanied by James K. Polk, Major Donelson, and Colonel Earle. The Cabinet went as far as the railroad extended westward. Van Buren took a most affectionate leave of Jackson and promised to visit him in the summer of 1838. A large majority of the representatives absented themselves from the capital while the Senate remained in a dull session to pass on nominations. The *Globe* found its most interesting news in the announcements of the progress of the homeward-bound party, and its editor tried to adjust himself to meet the adversaries of President Van Buren.

Jackson left Washington a poor man, but, nevertheless, a

[1] The *Globe*, Mar. 7, 1837; Samuel C. Busey, *Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past* (Washington, 1898), 361.
Blair was a member of the committee to plan the Inaugural Ball.

happy hero who was greeted by the Democracy along his journey as its great leader and political savior. But the severity of travel debilitated him. Soon he hoped that he might be permitted to pass on without parade, though it gave him pleasure to receive the plaudits and manifestations of gratitude from the public. His thoughts naturally turned to friends left behind. He affectionately wrote of his journey to Blair, in whom he had more confidence than in his adopted son, and in closing he begged Blair to thank Mrs. Blair for the comfort she had bestowed on him by presenting him with the admirable stockings which she had made for him. Jackson had grown feeble again and was dispirited. Little Rachel had fallen ill and constantly called for "Mrs. Blair and lisey [Elizabeth Blair]."[2] Cheering throngs allowed Jackson no quiet. The void was at Washington.

There were many Democrats, however, not to mention the Whigs, who welcomed the retirement of Jackson. They had disagreed with him on one or another of his political issues or some part of his policy. Among them was Benjamin Waterhouse, who had quite freely expressed his views to Levi Woodbury before Jackson had had a chance to rejoice over the election of Van Buren. "I really consider Andrew Jackson as a very felicitous man," he wrote. "I cannot help wishing the general would preserve silence, at the last term of his eight years; and thus, without saying a word, let the *Vox Populi,* pronounce the *Vox Dei.*" Waterhouse probably saw later that Jackson's popularity and designation saved the Democrats. Though Van Buren's popular majority was cut to 25,000, the Savannah *Georgian* disguised the near-defeat by saying that Van Buren held the distinction of being the lone candidate who had carried his native state. Neither side could find cause for boasting. Calhoun's after-thought was a bitter realization that the opposition could have defeated Van Buren had it known where to strike the fatal blow. He did not believe Van Buren could maintain himself, for Jackson had left a party convulsed with internal agitations to face an unrelenting opposition. Calhoun proposed to use Van Buren's embarrassments to release the South from its commercial shackles, and he somewhat

[2] The *Globe,* Mar. 13, 21, 27, 1837; Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Jan. (?) 1837, Feb. 26, 1837, Mar. 11, 1837.

appeased his bitterness in the observance that the "more decent portion under Rives, Buchanan and others" were making "war against their more filthy associates under Benton, Kendall, Blair, and Johnson." John J. Crittenden chimed in with a passing quotation on the day of Jackson's departure: "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it [the capital]." [3]

2

Jackson had scarcely settled down at his beloved Hermitage when troubles rapidly beset his lieutenants at Washington. Prosperity which had marked the last few years faded like a late spring frost under a rising sun. Mills closed, banks shut their doors, prices dropped, and the Whigs assailed the administration from every angle, while internal dissensions within the Democratic fold threatened the existence of the party.

The very day that the Nashville papers arrived at the *Globe* office bearing the news of the arrival of Jackson at the Hermitage, Blair wrote to his beloved Jackson that a succession of troubles had come upon the *Globe*. Blair was not alone in difficulty. The whole administration was facing a crisis from which it failed to emerge victorious four years later. But what were the difficulties which had fallen in the way of the *Globe?* First, the friends of the Bank had convinced the merchants that the panic of 1837 was the result of Jackson's policies and the Specie Circular which Jackson issued demanding that hard money should be paid for government lands. Worse still, many influential Democrats were turning against their party leaders. The editor was mortified at the prospects of seeing his party sink to a minority under the leadership of Van Buren. He longed for Jackson.

> My wife has sighed for you like a lost father. Your letter she carried in her bosom for some days until I got possession of it and put it by in an old family pocket-Book which I intend to hand down to posterity with my own will in it— She has now transferred her love to the Cow [which Jackson had given to Blair]—has her stabled and curried like a rare horse—and I do not know but she may follow the Egyptian superstition which turned the Bull Apis into a divinity.[4]

[3] The *Globe*, Mar. 10, 1837; Blair MSS., Benjamin Waterhouse to Levi Woodbury, Feb. 4, 1835; *Calhoun Correspondence*, 367-68, Calhoun to Jas. H. Hammond, Feb. 18, 1837; Coleman, *op. cit.*, I, 105, Crittenden to A. T. Burnley, Mar. 8, 1837.

[4] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Apr. 5, 1837.

Blair had just begun to taste the bitter struggle which lay ahead of him. Calhoun's prognostication was already being fulfilled; the opposition was ready for a concerted assault upon Jacksonianism and Van Burenism. If Blair's exposition of the aims of the Republican party in the closing session of Congress (1837) is wholly reliable, they had hoped gradually to reduce the tariff rates without injury to interests which had sprung up under it; they had intended to restrict the sale of public lands as far as was consistent with the paramount interest of settlement, and to keep them out of the grasp of the capitalists; and thirdly, they had attempted to prevent the accumulation of a surplus, which in its distribution was calculated to produce a new and untried system of relations between the state and federal governments, and which might in its operation overthrow the happy balance theretofore maintained between the two systems.[5] It was a keen disappointment when these aims were defeated.

A one-sided picture of the political situation is portrayed by the editorial diatribes in the *Globe*. A reader grows dizzy at the thrusts at banks which had over-issued, land speculators, paper money, English bankers, and varied forms of accusations against abolitionists and nullifiers, Clay and Webster, the *National Intelligencer,* and the moneyed oligarchy.[6] Interspersed with these are pertinent defenses of hard money, or paper money with metal behind it, and the notorious Specie Circular. Blair warned the debtors, traders, and the West generally, that Biddle schemed to force their property under the hammer. That accomplished, Biddle would presumably besiege Congress with petitions for another bank. Blair resorted to the old plan of arousing the masses, that of attempting to convince the public that the Whigs hoped to break the local banks and restore the Barings and Biddle to their prestige in our government. It is known that had there been no Specie Circular the financial stringency in Europe would have inevitably been reflected in America. Blair, who was on the scene and amidst the contestants for power, attributed the cause of the panic which seized this country to the issuance of paper money and to the avaricious new class of merchants and moneyed aristocrats whom he called the millionaires. He explained the new

[5] The *Globe,* Feb. 27, 1837.
[6] *Ibid.,* Mar. 20, Apr. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 1837.

term to his readers as one which referred to men who were dangerous to Democracy; they were men who dealt in gigantic speculations which ran into millions of dollars. With them were Biddle and the Josephs. They had forced the banks to suspend the payment of specie, with the double object of relieving themselves from being called on to pay for the present, and, finally, paying in a depreciated currency, thus throwing their losses on other portions of the community.[7]

All explanations, jabs, and defenses were wholly unavailing. The crisis of 1837 brought financial ruin and personal distress. Naturally the Whigs sought to put the blame squarely on the Democrats. Quite naturally Clay called for the reëstablishment of the Bank. Van Buren believed that the states, not the national government, were responsible for the crisis; that the real cause lay in the distention of credits. Calhoun wisely saw his opportunity, agreed with Van Buren, and realigned himself with the administration.

A financial policy had been partly pre-determined. The bullionist elements of the administration, including the President, supported Jackson's Specie Circular. Among hard-money men were found the factionists who had revolted against the Albany Regency in New York. They had returned to the party in 1836, bringing with them their name of Loco Focos and their idea of the fallibility of all credit currency and the unique efficacy of hard money such as gold and silver. Van Buren, thus supported, and encouraged by Jackson and prodded daily by editorials in the *Globe,* extended the Specie Circular to include postal receipts, and even recommended that Congress adopt a policy which would require all receipts of the government to be in gold and silver.

Then Van Buren took his third step. He believed national banks and state banks had failed properly to disburse the receipts of the government. Instead of the old system he proposed his scheme, known as the sub-treasury. By this plan, branches of the national treasury were to be established in various parts of the Union to receive the government's money and to make payments. The administration forces termed the proposal, as introduced in Congress, the Independent Treasury bill. Its opponents derisively

[7] *Ibid.*, Apr. 8, 14, 19, May 20, 26, 27, 1837.

labeled it the Divorce Bill, because it would separate private and public business.

Probably one of the most exasperating contests in the history of Congress ensued when Van Buren's proposal for an independent treasury made its appearance as a bill. During the spring, summer, and fall of 1837 the *Globe* wrestled with Biddle's protagonists. It attempted to weld the Democratic masses into a solid phalanx against the Bank. The Secretary of the Treasury descended into the arena to defend the Specie Circular. His articles found conspicuous places in the *Globe*. Statistics on the fall of prices of cotton during the periods 1818-20 and 1825-27 were quoted to show that the Bank then in full operation did not prevent the fall. The people were reminded that there was no specie circular in either of those periods. The slaveholders were assured that the administration disliked abolition, that Van Buren hoped to maintain the rights of all the states, and none more resolutely than those of the South. Blair's objective was nothing less than the extraction of Calhounism and nullification from the Southern Democracy and the addition of only the desirable elements to the party. He wanted an irresistible public opinion. Accordingly, the *Globe* assured the South that Van Burenism meant strict construction of the Constitution, that the President favored the interests of all against the pretensions of particular classes, through the adoption of a sound currency and not paper currency; that he wished to be guided by the principles set forth by enlightened economists.[8]

Meantime bank failures, suspension of specie payments, mobs, riots, and political harangues produced considerable excitement. Blair sought to blame the bank agitators, nullifiers, and abolitionists for the ills of the country. As he had done in Jackson's administration, he spared neither energy nor words. He adopted a new motto for the *Globe* calling for every friend of social order and sound morals to rally to a patriotic stand against threatened violence and bloodshed. The new motto—"Supremacy of the laws and the Constitution"—became Blair's party battle-cry.

Although Jackson had physically retired from the presidency,

[8] Jackson MSS., Woodbury to Jackson, Apr. 6, 1836; the *Globe*, May 3, July 6, 31, Nov. 20, 1837.

his spiritual direction went on. He kept in close touch with affairs at Washington, and his influence was used by his lieutenants. Blair sent him the *Globe* and any documents which he needed to see. "While I remain Editor," wrote Blair, "you will consent to take it [the *Globe*] as a free will offering." On the absorbing questions of the Specie Circular and the Bank, Jackson cautioned Blair that their friends must remain firm. "Guard our specie, these American Houses, the bearings [Barings], and Biddles Bank will all fail, and carry with it soon the Bank of England—at least by firmness we preserve our revenue, and deposit Banks, and our country from ruin—*Be ye therefore, steadfast and firm in well doing,* and the administration and country is safe—the least temporising, and your all wrecked on Caribdis." A policy of no temporizing had long been Jackson's and it harmonized with Blair's aggressiveness. He asked Jackson to scold him as of yore, if he made a mistake, faltered, or blundered. Proud of the rapidly growing bundle of letters from the Old Hero, Blair continued his attacks on the General's enemies.

Taking the offensive when the administration was actually on the defensive was not an easy task. There were too many men and subjects that had to be protected from an increasing number of enemies. Scorn, sarcasm, and argument became wearisome. Nevertheless, Blair resorted to his usual tactics. When Biddle and Adams disagreed over the policy of the Bank, Blair readily informed Adams that he might have his good hickory cane to use on Biddle's head. The Nashville *Union* was used as a medium through which Blair attacked White, the "detestable Judas," who had dared to support the Bank, oppose Van Buren, and break with Jackson.

Much of the space in the editorial columns in the *Globe* during Van Buren's term is devoted to the defense of Jackson. The editor dedicated his life to the protection of the character and fame of his benefactor. He liked Van Buren, respected him, formed an enduring friendship with him, but never idolized him. Van Buren was to Blair a paragon of virtue, but Jackson was a super-man. Van Buren was too cool, distant, and wily to supplant the warm-hearted and trusting Jackson in the editor's affections. Consequently, the *Globe* did not have pæans of praise for Van

Buren as it had for Jackson. It, however, did not compromise with the knavery of the Whigs nor the villainy of the deserters. Consonant with his policy, Blair, in a stream of letters to the Hermitage, repeatedly assured Jackson that Van Buren was keeping Jackson's legacy. Blair agreed that his own epithets were not in good taste and that his editorials were harsh, but he excused himself saying that it was "almost impossible for one writing under the provocations of such industrious liars and knaves, Whigs, deserters, et al.," as he had to deal with, to be temperate always in terms.

The desire of Van Buren to have Blair tone down his caustic editorials did not interfere with his determination to follow in the footsteps of Jackson. The President was ready to listen to compromises, for he was distressed over the condition of the country, but he was certain that it was his duty to avoid a departure from Jackson's policy on the Bank. Joel R. Poinsett's overtures to Biddle were soon offset by the pronouncement of the administration's mouthpiece that those who deluded themselves into believing a reëstablishment of a bank was possible merely cheated themselves. White, who was moving heaven and earth to have Bell defeat Polk for the speakership, unfortunately intimated that Jackson favored a bank of some description. Blair unhesitatingly published some of Jackson's private letters to refute White, and drew from Jackson his hearty approval. Jackson delightedly wrote of his prayers for the editor's success in all things, and his continued success and energy to "lash the Whigs—no temporising." Van Buren should push his plan to separate the State and the Bank. Let it be carried by a large majority and thus demolish the opposition forever.[9]

The destruction of the opposition was almost impossible. The Whig press called for a recharter of the Bank, or for a bank to relieve the distressed people. Biddle was willing to make peace for the good of his bleeding country. The *Globe* tried to stiffen the backs of wavering Democrats. The editor denied the charge that he was an extremist and explained that his adopted policy was to follow the voice of the people, not to create public opinion.

[9] The *Globe*, May 10, July 1, 22, Aug. 17, 25, 29, 1837; Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, May 26, 1837, and Jackson to Blair, Aug. 20, 1837.

Whatever was said or written failed to stem the rising tide of Whiggery. The summer elections went against Van Buren. His Independent Treasury bill was lost in the House. Scoldings and pleas of the loyalists were in vain, and the lashings of the *Globe* fell on heedless ears. Nothing seemed to be left save a sweet morsel of hoped-for revenge. Blair wrote to Jackson that Bell and White were desperate in their disappointments. Jackson predicted Bell's political death in two years; Blair declared that old White would soon be selling oats at nine pence a bushel on his farm in Tennessee.[10]

A smaller, though dependable, majority was returned to the Democrats in 1839. They reintroduced and passed the Independent Treasury bill, which became effective not before 1843. Calhoun's assistance made its passage possible after a long, arduous discussion. The coalition between Whigs and Nullifiers seemed to be disrupted forever. Calhoun and Clay read each other's pedigrees and laid bare their relations during the short period of the coalition. Blair declared that the passage of the Independent Treasury bill was a revolution in the government as established by Alexander Hamilton, a restoration of the government to its original principle.[11] Blair had fought the Bank for three decades. Benton, Kendall, Van Buren, Woodbury, and kindred spirits were rejoicing. Blair, as usual, hurried the glad news to the Hermitage:[12]

> Your last letter would have brought our temporizers in Congress up to the mark if their own fears had not done it before it arrived. I should have put it in the *Globe* and I think that they would have discerned it in the spirit of the Cæsar who had led them to so many victories. I read it to Eliza with pretty much of the strong emphasis it inspired, and involuntarily she said to me through the day, "Our old Chief should never die—how blest would our country be if she always had such patriots to take the lead in her affairs"— The passage of the Independent Treasury finishes your work, if we can maintain it—and I think we shall.

The passage of the Independent Treasury measure was an oasis in a desert of ills and defeats. The panic, repudiation of

[10] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, June 16, Mar. 11, Feb. 11, 1838.
[11] The *Globe*, Jan. 23, 24, May 18, June 30, July 6, 1840; Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, May 11, 1838.
[12] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, July 12, 1840.

debts by states, loss of credit in Europe, decreasing land sales, embarrassing contraction of debts by the government, and corruption in the civil service, were some of the troubles which befell Van Buren. He had no magic wand to allay them. The Canadian insurrection sprang up unexpectedly to embarrass the administration and to thrill thousands of Americans who joined "Hunter's Lodges" to assist the insurrectionists. Van Buren maintained a neutral policy at the cost of bringing against him the accusation that he was responsible for the failure of the movement. Also, the recalcitrant Seminole Indians of the Everglades in Florida persistently refused to be moved westward. The apparent friendliness of the government toward slavery excited denunciation from the abolitionists. The incipient question of the annexation of Texas would not lie dormant for a few years, and the spectre of the slavery issue crept like a darkening shadow over the land.

Under such pressing circumstances all hands were needed at the party front. Blair had promised himself the happy privilege of visiting at the Hermitage. Even though death had come into the homes of both Blair and Jackson, and the ex-President's life was ebbing away, the editor felt as if he must remain at his post until political victory was won. Major Donelson's wife, Emily, had died of a pulmonary disease. Blair's father had died on January 7, 1837, having been a devoted elder in the Presbyterian church and having lived a "life of exemplary virtue and religious faith." And soon Colonel Earle, a painter of Jackson portraits, followed. "His death shocked us all," wrote Jackson to Blair, "but particularly myself—he was my friend, my associate, and traveling companion, a good man and sincere friend." Jackson's losing battle with dropsy could not be checked with white lead, which his doctor used, nor with the "consumption root" which Blair prescribed. In spite of these reasons why he should visit the Hermitage, in spite of his eight years of service in Washington, the "City of dust and hot wind," and without the least relaxation other than horseback riding, Blair in keen disappointment chose to remain at the *Globe* office for the sake of his party.

Was the policy of the *Globe* largely directed from the Hermitage? Undoubtedly, yes. It must, however, be remembered that much of the information and many of the countless suggestions

upon which Jackson depended to form his opinions reached him through Blair, Van Buren, Kendall, the *Globe,* Polk, Grundy, and Major Donelson. Blair repeatedly assured Jackson of Van Buren's good intentions, reported on his health and humor, and explained his beliefs on measures. Blair's own opinions were not omitted. He promised Jackson that his confidential letters which had the slightest tendency to give use to improper constructions should not exist among the Blair papers. These letters were to be for the eyes of Blair and Van Buren, no others.

CHAPTER XIV

The Election of 1840

King Matty he sat in his "big White House,"
A curling his whiskers fine,
And the Globe man, Blair, sat by his side.
A drinking his champaigne wine, wine, wine.
A drinking his champaigne wine.

In 1840 the Democracy generally accepted Van Buren as its candidate without serious question. Jackson unhesitatingly spoke of Van Buren's "Eight Years" in his correspondence with Blair. The faith of the latter was strengthened by that of Jackson, who believed in the ultimate sound judgment of the people.

However optimistic the forces of the administration became, moments of despondency gripped them at Washington. The period seemed to be one of seesaw in the waxing and waning of political strength. There were times when the whole Democracy looked as if it were tumbling down to utter ruin. Ambitious deserters and dissatisfied Democrats threatened ominously. The *Globe* was sued for libel, and although acquitted, the editor must have spent many anxious hours. Van Buren wavered in the anti-Bank policy when he caused Blair to permit Poinsett to write a conciliatory article on the Bank for the *Globe*. The situation was extremely troublesome. The adept "Magician," Van Buren, failed to see around the curves of his tortuous path. Blair tried to produce harmony within the party by deftly striking the keys of his administration organ while Jackson sang and the President turned the music.[1]

Harmony and unity were uppermost in the editor's mind. He reassuringly wrote Jackson that the "President holds the reins you left in his hands with firmness and guides with skill and I

[1] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Apr. 14, 26, 1839; *Biddle Correspondence*, Biddle to E. C. Biddle, Oct. 31, 1838.

doubt not will triumphantly accomplish all that your heart could wish." Yet he explained that the President was constantly embarrassed with appointees which Jackson had elevated to office—men who were paralyzing the administration with their lukewarmness or open rebellion against party discipline. Van Buren hesitated to remove them for fear his action might be misconstrued. Blair advised the removal of the turncoats as an absolute necessity to party success. Jackson was mindful of the situation. He had written to Felix Grundy that the spies of W. C. Rives and other corruptionists should be swept from the register of the government.[2] The President finally took action, and soon the *Globe* had occasion to defend the administration against the charges of proscription which Whiggery brought against it.[3]

The Democrats had a policy and principles to defend. A large majority of them wanted these carried out under Jackson's flag and in Van Buren's name. The Whigs fell heir to an opposition policy in 1836 and used it to advantage. They refused to be caught on the Bank issue, although the *Globe* tried to make a case against them on that subject, and at the same time warned the new Bank president, Dunlap, to avoid an attempt to inject his cause into politics. Had Blair been able to pin the Bank issue to the Whigs, results might have been different.

A second issue which appealed to the *Globe* as a commendable one was that of anti-abolition of slavery. Petitions for the abolition of slavery were sent to the House and Senate where Adams and Webster refused to allow the Democrats to rest in peace, even after the passage of the notorious gag resolutions. Blair began early in the campaign to agitate the question and to stir up the friends of the Union, the South, and the party to the realization of the dangers which lurked in the united forces of abolitionists, federalists, and Bankites. He quoted inflammatory paragraphs from the *Emancipator* and appended to them purposeful, stimulating editorials. Clay, still in the limelight as a presidential possibility, was prematurely denounced as the generalissimo, the darling and the champion of the factions opposed to Jacksonism. Adams was especially hated as a misanthrope who indulged in a

[2] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Mar. 28, 1839; The *American Historical Magazine, op. cit.*, Jackson to Grundy, Feb. 20, 1839.

[3] The *Globe*, Mar. 4, 25, Apr. 2, 5, 1839.

heart-corroding spirit of revenge for consuming an hour a day in attempts to introduce abolitionist petitions, pleading for an annulment of the gag resolutions, and discussing the Texas question. The party majority in Congress had passed on the matter of petitions. Why persist in wasting the hours which able men needed to introduce important bills? Six months later Blair found Adams still "mumbling over petitions—reading and restating, from successive copies of the same printed petitions (signed by different, probably fictitious names), the same jargon from the Abolition spinsters and others" which Congress had no constitutional right to consider.[4] It was a curious turn of fortune that found Adams fighting for the right to petition and the right to be heard during the Van Buren administration while among his opponents were many of those who had bitterly assailed the Sedition Acts which were passed during his father's presidency.

In his attempts to enlist the support of the slave interests, Blair tried to convince the South that its social institutions were systematically made the objects of incessant attacks and misrepresentations. This was presumably done behind the mask of universal philanthropy. The duty of the Democracy was to support the Union. The principles of each were identical. The two wings of the party were natural allies. "The rights of the South must be sustained by the Democracy of the North, not only from a principle of justice, but as a bond of mutual safety." If they separated, they were both irretrievably lost. The South, including Democrats and the Whigs, was reminded that it was in the halls of Congress, and not on Southern fields, where the great battle was to be fought and Southern institutions upheld or overthrown. After all, what was the difference between Northern and Southern Democrats? By the publication of extracts from Calhoun's letters, the *Globe* endeavored to prove their principles identical.[5] How different were the principles of Whigs and even Calhoun Democrats who had allied themselves! Even Tappan hoped to rivet his Abolition party onto the Whigs! The shaggy Calhoun moved for a definite purpose, to be sure, toward the administration; the *Globe* once more published his speeches and defended

[4] The *Globe,* Dec. 18, 19, 1837; Feb. 28, Mar. 10, July 7, 26, 1838; Jan. 9, 1839; Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, July 7.

[5] The *Globe,* Sept. 6, 7, 21, 1838.

its action on the grounds of justice—to "vindicate him from the assaults of the Opposition." [6]

A friendly gesture on the part of Calhoun excited the hopes of the Van Buren men for a reunion of the factions. The *Globe,* feeling bolder and more determined than ever to prevent the South from joining the Whigs, kept the terrible spectacle of probable disunion ever before its readers. Its attacks on abolition were venomous. An editorial bearing the caption, "The Abolition Society as a Body, Embrace the Federal Cause," pointed out that the society was led by artful, disappointed, and ambitious politicians, who had nominated William H. Seward for governor of New York. The abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens was condemned as a degraded, notorious person who deserved to be denied the right of a seat in Congress. The women did not escape. They who signed abolitionist petitions were sarcastically asked to allow their husbands and brothers the privilege of running the government. The oratory of Daniel O'Connel was levied on for argument against abolition, and Harrison was denounced as a rank supporter of the hated agitators. Right or wrong, the *Globe* boasted that not a single abolition paper advocated the reëlection of Van Buren.[7] Political expediency made the question of abolition an issue.

Blair pursued just the opposite policy on the rising subject of Texas. Van Buren was unfortunately forced to formulate a policy toward the new Republic which Jackson had recognized as an independent nation during the last hours of his second term. Van Buren's procrastination proved inexpedient. By the time the representatives of Texas arrived in Washington with a request for annexation to the United States the subject was fraught with danger to the peace of our country. The President refused to negotiate for annexation, consequently angering his Southern friends. He attempted to hedge by assuring the South that he would allow no tampering with slavery. In doing that he alienated many of his Northern supporters. The *Globe* assumed a sphinx-like silence throughout the greater part of Van Buren's presidency. It published a few mild and inoffensive excerpts with a very few edi-

[6] *Ibid.,* Sept. 13, 21, Nov. 19, 1838; Apr. 29, Nov., 1839.
[7] *Ibid.,* Nov. 6, 24, 1838; Feb. 5, May 14, 25, Oct. 4, 22, 1839; Apr. 3, July 9, 1840.

torials favorable to only the independence of Texas. The subject was too dangerous for the sake of unity of the party to be given prominence. The Whigs recognized the possibilities of the Texan situation. In a letter to Jackson, Blair expressed his disgust at Adams, whom he called an old scoundrel, for agitating the Texan question.[8] When Blair did assume an aggressive policy on the annexation of Texas it caused his downfall.

He proposed to "carry the war into Africa" only on the subjects of the Bank, abolition, and expenditures.[9] He failed to reckon with the fact that he no longer had General Jackson in full command. "It will not do to take the defensive with the present offensive enemy," he wrote Jackson. He proposed to assume his policy with a disrupted party, with a President whose age, responsibility, and experience made him almost a statesman and a leader whose adroit political sagacity was exercised in a proverbial noncommittal policy. Van Buren lacked the spark of magnetism and driving power which Jackson possessed. Above all he was a victim of uncontrollable circumstances. Blair's description of Van Buren as a candidate for reëlection was doubtless sincere, though somewhat unconvincing. "We have a Chief Magistrate," wrote Blair, "thoroughly tested in all the trying events of our day. Throughout the war against the foreign enemy of our institutions, and in every shape which the domestic political contest has assumed, no man exists, save his immediate predecessor, who has evinced as much zeal, or the same steady unyielding resolution, in support of the cause of the people," as Van Buren. "Unsullied probity in political and private life—a cool and clear judgment of vast comprehension—a well-read and a thorough practical conversancy with all that belongs to the duty of a statesman—a gifted genius to look through the deed and hearts of men, and a bland and persuasive and at the same time animating, eloquence to convince and conduct them—a cheerful and benignant temper, attractive and polished manner, all combine in the character of Mr. Van Buren." [10]

Deep in his heart, Blair trusted to the luck and influence of

[8] *Ibid.*, Aug. 28, 1838; Feb. 18, Mar. 27, Apr. 3, June 1, Aug. 30, Sept. 25, Nov. 14, Dec. 11, 1839; Nov. 27, 1840; Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, July 7, 1838.

[9] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Sept. 15, 1838.

[10] Stanwood, *History of the Presidency,* I, ch. 16; The *Globe,* May 8, 1839.

Jackson to carry the President through a successful election. "I never despond of the republick," Jackson wrote encouragingly to Blair. "Always rest in confidence upon the virtue of the people." Blair, hypnotized by his own arguments, looked forward to the election with the strongest assurance that Jackson's principles would triumph in an overwhelming demonstration. Once the contest was definitely decided, he promised Jackson, he would with his wife and daughter have a holiday and a jubilee at the Hermitage with one whom they united in "loving better than any man on earth." [11]

The Whigs held their National Convention at Harrisburg, December 4, 1839, and there nominated William Henry Harrison for President. Harrison had received considerable support in the Northern states in 1836, and he was free from the objectionable experiences which were unalterably attached to Henry Clay. This union and harmony convention chose Tyler for a running mate with Harrison. Blair took the nomination of Harrison lightly, writing to Jackson that "We look upon Harrison's nomination as the best the Whigs could make for us. His abolitionism must prove a perfect cement to our party in the South and give us every state—In the North we shall embody the whole Democracy against its repeatedly vanquished foe, now stript not only of the enthusiasm which would animate it in a struggle for a leader of high talents and on whom they could rely to consolidate their principles by a powerful administration, but they are stript of the Bank facilities." Jackson must have agreed with Blair for he considered Harrison a mere imbecile and a puppet for Clay, Webster, and their unprincipled clique.[12]

Matters seemed to be very encouraging to the Democrats when Calhoun and his nullifiers assisted the Van Buren forces in the election of Blair and Rives as printers to Congress; that was to placate thousands of Jackson's friends, thought Blair; and it seemed to portend a consolidation of the Democratic forces in the South. The editor of the *Globe* believed this action would make the *Globe* more useful and cripple federalism by destroying its insidious organ, the *National Intelligencer*. Furthermore, the *Globe* assumed that every intelligent man in the country knew

[11] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Oct. 6, 1839; Jackson to Blair, May 2, 1839.
[12] *Ibid.*, Blair to Jackson, Dec. 15, 1839; Jackson to Blair, Dec. (?), 1840.

Harrison was chosen a candidate by a combination and bargain between Federalists and Abolitionists. Its compatriot, the *Enquirer,* plunged headlong into the Virginia election, published a new paper, the *Crisis,* supported Van Buren heartily, and brought Calhoun to Richmond to help defeat the Whigs. Ritchie, too, "carried the war into Africa." [13]

Meanwhile Kendall had reached the limit of his physical endurance and financial stability. He resigned as Postmaster-General to recuperate his health and replenish his private means to save his poor family. Blair gave him lucrative employment. Kendall supervised the circulation of the *Extra Globe,* a cheap dollar edition, published "to neutralize the poison which the Federal party" was "laboring to instil into public sentiment." From this enterprise he probably received a total of about twelve thousand dollars. He assumed the responsibility for the editorials in the *Weekly Globe.* In this manner the two former Kentucky editors labored to carry Van Buren triumphantly to victory.[14]

The campaign dragged until the Whigs hit upon a scheme of popularizing the log cabin and hard cider as a means of appealing to the people. Harrison was not permitted to make a personal canvass for fear he would not say the right thing. He had unfortunately written a letter to a man in Maine in which he declared that the charges that he was pro-slavery were vile slanders, and said he was in sympathy with the abolitionists.[15] A political portrait of Harrison's record seemed to prove him to be a typical Federalist, and to support him, said the *Globe,* the Whigs had six or seven hundred broken banks, some hundred millions of shinplasters, half a dozen Congressional bullies, and an array of orators of all talk and no cider.

The new turn in the campaign based on the popularity of the emblems of raccoon skins, log cabins, and hard cider nettled and maddened Blair and the Democratic editors. Such methods were new. Blair hardly knew how to meet the situation. Scorn failed. The Whigs with all the talents, decency, piety, morality, religion, philanthropy, modesty, wealth, roasted oxen, sheep, political rats,

[13] *Ibid.,* Blair to Jackson, Dec. 15, 1839; the *Globe,* Jan. 2, 1840; Ambler, *op. cit.,* 210-15.

[14] The *Globe,* May 11, 15, 1840; Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, June (?), 1840.

[15] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, June (?), 1840; the *Globe,* Feb. 18, June 9, 1840.

onions, and a "lawyer sitting cross legged on coon skins nibbling a johnny cake," and "goody," "gossiping" "old Harrison" marched on to the chagrin of their opponents. Blair declared that the question was not whether Harrison lived in a log cabin, but one of whether he was a friend of those who lived in log cabins. Harrison, said Blair, was an occupant of one of the finest mansions in the West in which he lived in colonial regal style, and received six thousand dollars a year for a sinecure office, while he possessed one among the "finest estates in the rich agricultural state of Ohio." Furthermore, said Blair, Harrison was nominated by lawyers, merchants, speculators, rich manufacturers, and apostates from the Democracy. He had declared in favor of a high tariff, advocated a National Bank, and avowed himself a Federalist. He was impossible for a President of the United States.

The opposition press and orators had arguments of a similar brand for those of the Democrats. Van Buren's dinners at which his cut glass and china were displayed lent themselves to Whig oratorical exaggerations. Pomp and display and regal etiquette at social levees and receptions did not harmonize with democracy. Criminations and recriminations were as easily made as the majority of them were untrue.

The *Globe* attempted again and again to turn the tide of discussion to some principle or issue. It exposed the do-nothing Congress of 1840-41 as a president-making machine; it argued that the flood of Federalist paper money caused the increase in public expenditures; it stood flatly on Jackson's principles as set forth in his addresses; it charged England with supporting the Whigs, and the Whigs with sympathizing with the seizure of slaves by England; it made its great fight on Harrison and abolition and the question: "Shall this be a Government of the banks or of the people?" [16] It called on all Democrats to celebrate the Fourth of July with solemnity and fervor and the feeling of our fathers of 1778-79 who fought to save the flame of liberty. The danger of 1840 was no less than then, for British capitalists had their hirelings marching through America to mislead, debase, and corrupt liberty's soldiers.

[16] The *Globe,* Apr. 3, 6, 13, 18, May 2, July 1, 1840. The *Globe* for April to September, 1840, is full of similar arguments.

Blair and Kendall appealed to the moderates, to the working class, and to all who desired the defeat of the silk-stocking Whigs. They raged at Harrison's dignified reserve and defended Van Buren's war and pro-slavery records. They compared the military record of Jackson with that of "petticoat" Harrison, and declared:

> This is the most violent political struggle there has been since 1800. The excitement is great and universal, pervading the whole population, of all ages, classes, and conditions; in the city and in the country, in all the public thoroughfares, in steamboats and in railroads, at the public hotels and in the field and workshops, and in every family circle, you hear nothing but politics, politics.[17]

Appeals were in vain, a rallying cry was sent out to stay the "coons" and all the Democrats to arms—to the polls. *Extra Globes* were sold by thousands. In October the Democrats were urged and entreated to be active and profitably employed. The "Reign of Terror" was on. Insolent Federalists were supposed to be insulting and bullying the Democrats who walked the streets in the cities. "Arouse, then, Democrats, and vindicate your rights before it is too late; before the chains of the Bank Aristocracy are riveted upon you. To the polls! and drive back the insolent enemies of liberty and of equal rights."

By November Blair had lost hope of victory. On November 7, he wrote to Jackson that he was setting sail for Cuba, where he was taking his daughter, Betty, for her health. "If we are beaten," he wrote, "it is by the most enormous fraud at the polls ever witnessed in any country." The *Globe* gave expression to this sentiment. It became the duty of that organ to announce the defeat of its party, November 8. Blair proposed to his chief that Democratic associations should be formed in every county in the Union to begin a four-years' campaign. "I think," he wrote to Jackson, "Mr. Van Buren would command the support of the whole Democracy in a more unbroken phalanx than any other man." Let his defeat be avenged. He besought General Jackson to write to his friends on the subject, and to write a line of comfort to Mrs. Blair, who was staying at home to watch over the *Globe*. Blair still clung to Van Buren who continued to be a losing politician.

[17] *Ibid.*, July 10, 18, Aug. 13, 24, 25, 26, 1840. See the *Globe* for July to Oct.

CHAPTER XV

The Fall of the *Globe*

As we had made our means by the support of the Democracy, we [Blair and Rives] were willing to devote them to the cause.

—Blair to Jackson.

I

The election of 1840 proved to be an overwhelming defeat for Van Buren. "Little Van" was so much "a used up man" that the electoral vote stood 234 to 60 in favor of Harrison. The scorn which the Democratic party poured out on the Whigs had changed to fear, to anger, and then to distress, before the election had closed. The *Globe* had explained confidently that Harrison was a "man of straw, stuck on a pole, not to frighten, but to attract the Abolition birds of prey in the North" and to tickle the South, especially Virginia. Tyler was considered a mere catspaw to gather a few chestnuts for Federalism in the South. After the election the *Globe* greeted the victors with charges of stupendous frauds, of profiting by the influence of English capitalists, and of having a puppet who was to be governed by Webster and Clay.[1]

The presidential party which left Cincinnati for Washington was described as a parade which satisfied the vanity and stirred the ego of Harrison. The trip became a progress of speech-making, whether the President traveled on a splendid steamer fitted for the occasion or traveled in military array accompanied by music and firing of cannon. Abolitionists, friends of the Bank, and expectant job-hunters applauded the triumphant march. "How different this from the course of the real hero—the brave and magnanimous Jackson! He left the Hermitage without a speech making display —passed on quietly by the nearest route to Washington—and surprised the people" by presenting himself at Gadsby's as a private

[1] Stanwood, *History of the Presidency*, I, 203-204; The *Globe*, Mar. 5, 1840, and Feb. 4, 9, Mar. 13, 1841.

citizen. What a contrast! Even the scroll in the talons of the eagle in the Senate chamber which bore the motto of the Union, *E pluribus unum,* fell to the floor when Harrison arrived in the capital. The hand of the Goddess of Liberty, in front of the Capitol, bearing in it the Constitution, met a similar fate. And soon the cordon of the flags of the states that voted for Harrison which stretched across Pennsylvania Avenue separated at its center, dropped "North" and "South," and met an unhappy end as it was trampled in the mire.

Blair had not temporized. He had denounced the deserters without mercy, and had granted no quarter to the enemy. The time was at hand, March 4, 1841, when the *Globe* was to be given no quarter. It was dismissed as printer to Congress; it lost profitable departmental printing; and above all, it became unofficial. The Whigs could in no way tolerate it.

Harrison's inaugural address was considered a Websterian document. The Charleston *Mercury* approved Blair's characterization of it, going a step further by saying that the main purpose of the address was consolidation. Blair maintained that the day of the inaugural was portentous of coming events. Clouds darkened the sky, wind and dust swept the streets, only to be followed by cold, snow, and heavy thunder. What a day for the pageantry of "log cabins, trumpery flags, with silly mottoes—a little weaving machinery carried about on wheels, and protected in a sort of ark," all after a perambulating Chief Magistrate! On such a day, and at such an occasion, the President read the words of Webster which condemned the idea of the President being the defender of the people.

Other similar descriptions of the activities of the Whigs clearly defined the position of the *Globe.* It was aggressive, combative, and accorded with the prayer of Jackson who wrote: "May God protect us from a dissolution of the Union in the four years to come." The Democrats had cause to think that Harrison represented the party of Clay, and harshly said so. Proof of the fact rested in the calling of an extra session of Congress which Clay desired. To Clay and his friends the restoration of Whiggery and Federalism appeared most important. Blair announced before the session had accomplished anything that its purpose was to surprise

the nation, force upon it another national bank, levy a protective tariff, provide for the distribution of the public domain, and produce a national debt.[2] Before the session met, a swarm of office-seekers sought to displace the appointees of Jackson and Van Buren. Without blaming Harrison, the *Globe* complacently returned the compliments which the opposition press had paid it on the subject of the spoils system during the administrations of Jackson and Van Buren. The responsibility was placed upon Clay, Webster, and their unprincipled clique, as Jackson called them.[3]

On April 5 and 6, the *Globe* appeared with heavy black lines marking its pages, indicative of mourning for the passing of the President. It had dispatched its extra of April 4, announcing the untimely death of Harrison. That the President had been unduly exposed on inauguration day is patent; that the burdens of a newly elected Chief Magistrate were overtaxing to his strength is equally well known; but the *Globe* stressed the inconsideration of the President's health by his friends and job-hunters who swarmed into the White House.

2

The death of Harrison left the presidency to be filled by Tyler, the Southern vote-catcher. The Whigs were in no less a dilemma than was Tyler, nor were they any more than the Democrats left in wonderment as to what Tyler would do. Blair reviewed Tyler's record as a man who had been opposed to a national bank, national debt, protective tariff, and national internal improvements —a man of the Virginia school of politics. If Tyler asserted his own rights as a man of principle, he would have to break with Clay and Webster and with those who had elected him. If he listened to Clay, he must be an unprincipled tool, nothing more. Blair argued that the South would have to support Tyler if he stood on his old principles. Ritchie thought Blair's article on Tyler was in good taste and in good temper, and reprinted it in the *Enquirer*. He, too, eagerly watched for an announcement

[2] The *Globe*, Mar. 6, 18, 1841; Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Dec. (?), 1840.
[3] The *Globe*, Mar. 3, 19, Apr. 14, 1841; Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Dec. (?), 1840.

from Tyler, the observed of all observers, as to his proposed course. Unknown to Blair, the fate of the *Globe,* partly hung on Tyler's decision. Tyler made his address to Congress April 9. The next day the *Globe* offered no comment on his treatment of the currency, presented no objections to his attitude on the national debt, but expressed a fear that Tyler was going to give up his principles for a party.

The ambiguous and playful address of the President was soon overshadowed by the introduction of a resolution in Congress in which Clay outlined his heavy program. He proposed the very measures which Blair had long opposed. Furthermore, Tyler decided to retain the Cabinet as Harrison had organized it. Webster, an inveterate enemy of Blair, was Secretary of State, and four friends of Clay held Cabinet positions. For Blair there was little else to do, if he pursued his accustomed course of no temporizing, but to attack the President and all of his class. Clay did not wait for Blair to begin the quarrel. He expressed his hatred for Blair in vituperative speeches in the Senate. Accompanied by the active Mangum, Clay succeeded in persuading the Senate to commit the breach of contract with the editors of the *Globe* which has been herein described, thereby causing them a considerable pecuniary loss as well as one of political prestige.

Blair and Rives now made an appeal to the Democratic party to support the *Globe* as never before with subscriptions. Another *Extra* appeared May 18, 1841. Prominent Democrats and sympathetic presses were called upon to help wage a campaign for the return to power. The period from 1841-44, according to Blair, portended as much as any other period in the history of the country.

Chief among the subjects considered by the Whigs in this extra session of Congress was the Bank, which Clay sought to revive as a national institution with a capital of fifty million dollars. Blair digressed from his habitual publication of excerpts from the Democratic press by levying on the Whig press sufficiently to attempt to prove that the Bank was tottering. The contest between Blair and Tyler was inevitable. A nauseating repetition of former charges against the old Bank was reënforced by a careful review of Tyler's record on the Bank issue. The dangers of a national

bank were pictured in alleged corrupt influences on state legislatures (true in Pennsylvania), on the press through enormous loans, and upon Congressmen. To embarrass Tyler, Clay introduced a bill to repeal the Independent Treasury. The Secretary of the Treasury reported as favoring a national bank based on the national debt. This scheme was especially obnoxious to the *Globe*. The effort of Berrien to prove that an unconstitutional question was constitutionally settled by the election merely whetted the appetite of Blair. He could not and did not believe that Tyler could sign a bill which would revive the Bank of the United States, which he called "The Mother of Monsters." The bare passage of the bill in the Senate by one vote during the absence of two senators who said they were opposed to it, and in view of the fact that Tennessee was only half-represented, argued ill for it. The columns of the *Globe* were full of speeches against the bank bill during July, 1841; such as those of Madison, February 2, 1791, Calhoun, Benton, Allen, Buchanan, and Walker found prominent places. The state elections in Kentucky and Indiana were going somewhat in favor of the Democrats. The President vetoed the bill and its successor, the Fiscal Corporation bill, and thus closed the long contest over the Bank, but he produced a party crisis with his veto. All the members of his Cabinet, except Webster, resigned. Blair still had the exchequer proposal to oppose, and the Independent Treasury to defend.[4] The President failed in his attempt to form a party of his own out of the broken Whig party.

The *Globe* undertook to embarrass the Whigs at every turn. It opposed Clay's proposals for a bankruptcy law, the distribution of the surplus in the national treasury, and urged President Tyler to veto the tariff bill. It supported the preëmption and relief laws, advocated reciprocity with foreign powers, and ranted against the Webster-Ashburton treaty. It welcomed the retirement of Clay, who, worn out in public service, returned to Ashland.

At this juncture, the future for the Democracy looked bright. Blair, as yet, could show a consistent record on the important subjects. True, he had played hide-and-seek with Calhoun, but

[4] The *Globe,* Jan. 15, Apr. 8, May 31, June 2, 4, 5, July 6, 8, 14, 24, 26, 27, 28, 1841; Jan. 27, 1843.

that was politics. He had veered from a moderate protectionist to the position of a free-trader on the majority of imports. His columns were open to literature which was favorable to labor unions, to temperance and total abstinence, to the abolition of capital punishment, to universal manhood suffrage, and to anti-bankruptcy. He advocated free public education, the admission of Florida as a slave state, and a strong anti-British policy.[5]

The most dangerous subject with which the *Globe* played during Tyler's administration was that of abolition. Blair attempted to use the subject as a political issue to bring the Northern and Southern Democrats together, and tried at the same time to keep the movement from endangering the Union. For instance, the action of the legislature of Massachusetts in resolving that Congress had the constitutional right to abolish slavery in the territories of the United States was made to appear to be a direct blow at the South, particularly in reference to the admission of Florida. Blair assumed that Webster was the instigator of that movement. He asked what the South had done to counteract this hostility, and answered by saying: "Nothing! literally nothing! or worse." Southern Whigs had contributed to the restoration to power of the party which aimed at crippling the South. The Democrats of the North were given credit for more appreciation of the safeguards thrown around the rights of that part of the Union most exposed to aggression than the Southerners who were tainted with Federalism.

The richest field for political exploitation rested, however, in the abolitionist petitions which were daily urged upon the House by Adams. He labored for years to have Rule 21, which denied the right to petition Congress on the subject of abolition, stricken from the Journal. Finding himself unable to succeed, he had the people at Haverhill, Massachusetts, to draw up a petition for the dissolution of the Union. Through the introduction of this petition in Congress, Adams secured recognition on the question which lay nearest his heart. Blair had visited Congress and heard Adams "mumbling" until he had wearily said in the *Globe:* "This day, like hundreds of others, which should have been de-

[5] The *Globe,* Jan. 27, Feb. 8, 22, Apr. 11, 25, May 11, 16, June 2, Nov. 30, 1842; also Feb. 3, Apr. 3, 1841.

voted to the public concerns, was thrown away upon Mr. Adams." Blair believed that the ex-President had rendered abortive at least one-fourth of each session in pursuit of his "adulterous conception." But at last Blair thought he saw through the designs of the deep-laid schemes of Adams, who was accused of intending to copy the plans of the hated Hartford Convention. No doubt, said Blair, Adams aspired to dissolve the Union! [6]

Now Blair affirmed that Congress had the sole right to determine what petitions it would receive. He believed that Congressmen could refuse to introduce petitions which were obscene or hurtful to a member of Congress or to any one else. Consequently, when the Federalists of the North, joined by a few Southern allies, voted to discontinue Rule 21, Blair said Congress had resolved itself into a "state of nature."

Blair's premise that Adams preferred a severed Union to one with slavery in the South was wrong. But the use to which the *Globe* put such incendiary materials had far-reaching effects. The South had long since become sensitive to attacks on its peculiar institution. Blair, opposing abolition, hoped to use the movement in the North for the abolition of slavery and to unite his party to elect Van Buren in 1844. He did not count on stirring up the Southern wing to where it would not countenance Van Buren's dalliance with the annexation of Texas. Anti-abolition papers were levied upon for editorial excerpts for the *Globe*. Lectures on the subject of slavery were advertised to be delivered in Washington. Blair believed that Adams should be expelled from Congress.

There is no doubt that the *Globe* had its share in exciting the slave interests to their own defense. Calhoun had his powerful supporters in the border states, and he sought to draw all of the South to his side. Garrison and the scholarly Horace Binney worked equally as hard to stir the North against slavery. Churches were divided by the question. Riots and violence were known. The Underground Railroad was run by earnest men and women. Congress was visibly agitated. Congressman Snyder, a Democrat of Pennsylvania, refused to sit elbow to elbow with Abolitionist Giddings. Snyder erected a plank between himself and Giddings

[6] The *Globe*, Jan. 26, Mar. 8, 1842.

(they sat in a double desk-seat) as an eloquent protest to the doctrines of Giddings. The latter humorously wrote on his side of the board:

> Great wit with madness sure is near allied,
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

Snyder answered by writing on his side of the board:

> This links the act of mutual concession:
> This the white side; the other Abolition
> White is the emblem of our living God;
> Black was Cain marked, when driven forth to Nod.[7]

Before the election of 1844 had passed Blair had seen the danger of the militant attitude of the South. Thenceforth, he was a seeker of compromise, and that failing, he became a Free-Soiler and a Republican.

3

The eventful years of 1842-45 determined the fate of Blair and the *Globe*. As a participant in the politics of the time, he did not realize the impossibility of maintaining party unity. He labored diligently and successfully to prevent Tyler from usurping the leadership of the Democracy, which he thought rightfully belonged to Van Buren and Benton. The Tyler administration was described as a giving, a taxing, and a borrowing one. Blair believed the party did not and could not approve the general course of Tyler and should not assume the responsibility for his administration. He considered Tyler an unelected, accidental President, a man who had sacrificed the Democracy for the "Coons," and to them Tyler should look for his support.

Blair was assailed from many quarters because of his views on Tylerism. The *Madisonian,* Tyler's mouthpiece, left no stone unturned in its attempt to destroy the prestige of the *Globe*. Blair, supported by many papers of the old Jacksonian faith, denied the numerous charges that he was an extremist and boasted of his unflinching opposition to Tyler and his small following. He proposed to nip the ascendancy of Tylerism in the bud as he had done with White-Bellism. He sternly denounced ex-Governor Porter

[7] Fish, *op. cit.*, 295-99; The *Globe*, Dec. 15, 1842.

of Pennsylvania, who was appointed Secretary of War by Tyler, as an example of a devout professor of Democracy who had turned betrayer.[8] Blair's erstwhile friend, Isaac Hill, became a Tyler man and engaged Blair in a hot political and personal quarrel, and was read out of the party by the *Globe*. This was done with regret, for Blair had regarded Hill as a warm friend, an arduous and useful laborer in the Democratic cause, and a high-minded patriot. Hill assailed the *Globe* with his old-time energy and drew from the irate John C. Rives the charge of being a falsifier. Blair attributed Hill's fall to embarrassment in improvident speculation which involved him in compromising relations with banks and corporations. Furthermore Tyler was accused of buying the support of Hill and other editors preparatory to seeking the nomination for President.

Blair's attempt to prevent Tyler from competing with Van Buren and Benton for the leadership of the Democracy ruined Tyler politically. Blair considered the chances of the President's availability as laughable. In 1844 he scorned the idea advanced by the *Madisonian* that the *Globe* had caused Tyler to enter the presidential race as a third candidate. Jackson, fearful of the effects which Blair's course might have on Polk's chances for election, importuned Blair to desist in his attacks on Tyler. Calhoun, the Texas question, and the election of Polk had become involved. Jackson wanted the votes which the angered Calhoun might take away from Polk.[9] Blair promised to soften his criticisms of Calhoun, but as to Tyler, he would not follow Jackson. He defended Jackson against error, refuted Tyler's claims to any credit for measures, and declared that the multiplicity of difficulties which had confronted the administration was caused by the Whig party which had raised Tyler to power.

To Jackson, Blair wrote that he had great pleasure in the receipt of his views and assured him that:

> I have never known the man in whose councils I placed the same implicit confidence, & I feel that I am indebted to them for such success that has attended my weak efforts to the public cause—You may rest assured, therefore, that I will do nothing to drive off Tyler & his

[8] The *Globe,* Nov. 29, 1842; Mar. 10, 16, 28, June 16, Aug. 5, Sept. 1, 11, 1843.
[9] Jackson MSS. Jackson to Blair, July 26, 1844.

office holders or seekers from the support of Govr. Polk but I will not fail as you advise, "to cry out and spare not" when I see him pressing views or making false statements calculated *"to injure the great Republican cause and the Jeffersonian doctrine."*

Blair reminded Jackson that Tyler was a traitor to Jacksonism from 1830 to 1836, and that Tyler had been rebuked for his presumption to claim the authorship of reform measures. "My policy," wrote Blair, "has been not to identify our cause or our party or Colo Polk with Tyler or his measures or attempts at measures. He and they and his office holders are essentially odious to all the honest men of the country—I have been willing to let them come in to work for the cause on the way of expiation and if they hereafter deserve well, I should have no objection to see them get the only reward they aim at, some sordid compensation." To allow true Democrats to believe that Tyler and his handful of prostituted followers were entitled to come in for high honors when Polk was elected was too much for Blair. Treachery should not be rewarded in that way.[10]

Blair rejoiced in the spring election of 1843 when Virginia chose eleven Democrats, three Whigs, and only one Tyler man for Congress. This glorious victory was followed by another in the fall of 1844. The *Globe* thereafter regarded Tyler and his *Madisonian* practically powerless with Congress.

It would be inadvisable to consider Oregon and the election of 1844 separately. Blair was an expansionist at heart. He and his sons were imbued with the idea of manifest destiny. Therefore, when Senator Linn of Missouri introduced a bill (March, 1843) for the occupation and settlement of Oregon, Blair was ready to give it unstinted support. He advocated the occupation of Oregon also because he saw England rapidly girdling the globe with her power and her territorial claims. Her wealth, he thought, was a result of her foreign dominions. While it seemed as if the principle of Westward Expansion was intended by God to be our future guide, it was highly expedient to add impetus to our expansion by human endeavor.

The *Globe* published Senator Linn's reports of the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Oregon region. Immediate

[10] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Sept. 9, 1844.

responses were forthcoming from the presses of the country. Our claim up to 54° 40′ was far better than that of England, declared the *Democratic Review*. While this claim was being popularized throughout the United States, Americans were unpopular in London. The loss to English investors, in the failure of American public enterprises to pay dividends, in the failure of the Bank, and through the repudiation of interest and debts for a time by some of the states, swept away English faith in American credit. At the same time bankruptcy spread over America. Blair complained about hard times and promised a better grade of articles if the subscribers would pay up to help maintain a running expense of four hundred dollars a day. During these vexatious times the *Globe* reprinted an article by Lord Palmerston from the London *Chronicle* in which the author expressed his opinion on the subject of Oregon. He held that America had little or no claim to the region and that the establishment of a naval base there by America would be disadvantageous to England in case of war. Naturally Blair immediately advocated colonization and the location of military posts and naval stations in Oregon to prevent British acquisition of the territory.

Blair had no doubt thought that England planned to surround the United States. We were everywhere vulnerable, he said. Anarchy would or could be produced in Texas, and England could interfere. Therefore the United States should long since have cultivated the friendship of Texas and prepared against England. The war should be at once "carried into Africa." Outside of the use of anti-English propaganda and the denouncing of the Whigs and abolitionists for their opposition to annexation, the *Globe* passed, however, into 1844 without being forced openly to oppose or support annexation. It is reasonable to infer that Blair was sensible to the increasing pulse of the North.

Meantime other important events were happening. Blair zealously supported and Van Buren sympathized with the movement for a new constitution in Rhode Island. After Clay had delivered a number of farewell addresses in the Senate relative to his resignation, the *Globe* granted him a respite. Jackson considered the elections of 1842 as good omens. How he rejoiced in the results! "Whiggery is done," he wrote Blair, and "Clay will now *surely*

retire to Ashland to take care of his short horned Durhams, cut his cornstalks, and repair his fences, he is really a *dead coon.*" [11] A revived attack on Jackson's fame roused his friends to renewed efforts in his defense. The *Globe* kept his name before its readers by running a series of articles descriptive of the battle of New Orleans. Senator Linn introduced a bill to remit a fine of one thousand dollars which Judge Hall had laid on Jackson in 1815. The Whigs bitterly opposed the bill and succeeded in getting it amended until even the Democrats rejected it. The dispute lasted until February 16, 1844, when the fine was remitted. Linn had died during the interval. The Ohio legislature had directed Benjamin Tappan to speak in behalf of Jackson; C. J. Ingersoll had led the fight for Jackson in Congress after the death of Linn, and young Stephen A. Douglas had made a speech in the House in favor of the remission of the fine. But the most zealous and ingenious leadership in the contest with the Whigs was exhibited by Blair. To him, Jackson looked for the careful examination of facts. These Blair gave to Wright, Buchanan, Linn, Benton, and Walker.[12]

While he was engaged as investigator and publicity agent in the successful attempt to have Jackson exonerated, Blair was agitating for the nomination of Van Buren. He ingeniously made editorial attacks on Tyler by comparing his administration with those of Jackson and Van Buren. Blair decried any attempts by the Democratic press to factionize the party. He assumed that the whole party concurred in the opposition to a national bank, to a tariff for protection, to internal improvements by the national government, to abolition, to distribution, and to Federalism in all its phases. He advised Van Buren to take a swing around the circle on his visit to the Hermitage in the spring of 1842, and rejoiced to see the venerable patriot have the first wishes of his heart gratified by Van Buren's visit. Van Buren was advertised as having received the heartiest welcome possible from Jackson and the people. He was greeted in Chicago by large crowds which had

[11] Jackson MSS. Jackson to Blair, Oct. 29, 1842.

[12] Bassett, *op. cit.*, II, 745; the *Globe*, Mar. 26, May 19, June 28, Dec. 15, 1842; Sept. 7, 1843; Feb. 15, 1844; Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, June 4, 1842; Jan. 17, 26, 1843, and Blair to Jackson, Feb. 7, 9, 20, 22, Mar. 22, 1843. Also Blair to Jackson, Jan. 9, Feb. 11, 1844. Bassett, *op. cit.*, I, 225, 228, on the origin of the Hall case.

been told that he had a red head and sandy whiskers, and looked portly. The *Globe* felt positive that the people had found him a true Democrat with a hearty handshake instead of the reputed gold-spooned aristocrat.

A St. Louis newspaper had announced itself for Van Buren very soon after the election of 1840. Blair pursued a more cautious course. He tried to praise Calhoun into acquiescence before the *Globe* showed its colors. He warmly commended the example set by Ritchie—that of standing for the party and not for a selfish man who sought to elevate himself. While Blair was defending Calhoun, the latter followed in the footsteps of Clay by sending in his resignation to the Senate. If Blair suspected Calhoun of aiming at the presidency, he did not so express himself. He paid Calhoun a tribute when he said the people could not like a Spartan mother, say: "Sparta has many a worthier son than he." But on the next day (December 9, 1842) Blair published Benton's unequivocal declaration for Van Buren for President.[13]

Calhoun refused the chance which was given him to join those Democrats who desired to reëlect Van Buren. He suspected Ritchie of making an effort to force Virginia into a league with the New York politicians, and he hoped to see Ritchie displaced at Richmond.[14] At Washington, the *Spectator* changed ownership, raised the flag of Calhoun, and began a furious attack on the *Globe*. Blair answered with a defensive and offensive program. He resorted to the use of excerpts which depicted the falsity of the heart of Tyler, who presided at the "Court of Errors at Washington," and affirmed his belief that Calhoun did not sanction the course of the *Spectator* in casting aspersions on him and opposing Van Buren. He reviewed the neutral policy of the *Globe* toward all candidates, deprecating any movement to ruin the political prospects of any aspirant—Cass, Johnson, Woodbury, Buchanan, Van Buren, Calhoun. A spirited article on the subject, which was published in the *Globe* on April 13, 1843, ended with a strong eulogy on Van Buren—a near-declaration for him for President. Blair openly tried to be fair with Calhoun, although

[13] The *Globe*, Dec. 8, 9, 1842.
[14] *Calhoun Correspondence*, 527; the *Globe*, Mar. 18, Apr. 1, 5, 1843.

he accused Tyler of making advances to Calhoun to defeat Van Buren.

This affected neutral course of the *Globe* was a dangerous one to follow. It subjected Blair to attacks from too many factions and compromised his influence. He professed a desire to rest the decision in the hands of the people. He was sincerely honest and far-sighted enough to offer to accept any nomination, to support the candidate of his party, and to defend him when he was elected. But he believed that Van Buren was entitled to a second term, and that the party would tender him the honor if the factious candidates would only be content to wait their turn. He upheld the legislature of New York in its nominations of Van Buren provided the legislators were willing to abide by the decision of the party. A man by the name of Kaine, of Virginia, was dismissed as a representative of the *Globe* because he interfered in politics in that state, and Blair endeavored to remain neutral in a wrangle over the time to hold the national convention. He begged the Charleston *Mercury* to be as generous with Van Buren as the press which supported the ex-President was with Calhoun.[15]

While Blair was juggling the question of the presidency, he kept an ear turned to both Van Buren and Jackson. Van Buren had come to the conclusion that his Northern wing of the Democracy should no longer sacrifice themselves for the South. He wrote on the subject to Blair: "The truth is, that the Democrats of this State have suffered so often, and so severely in their advocacy of Southern men, and Southern measures, as to make them more sensitive in respect to complaints of their conduct from that quarter, than I could wish. They say, that they were broken down entirely by the support of Mr. Crawford that they were next brought to death's door by their efforts to sustain the Indian Policy of Genl. Jackson from which the South, and West have derived such incalculable advantages, and that their party has suffered in every limb by the abolition question, and all this is undoubtedly true." [16]

Van Buren gave Blair and Mrs. Blair an invitation to visit at

[15] The *Globe*, Apr. 14, 20, 24, 26, May 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, July 26, 1843.
[16] Blair MSS., Van Buren to Blair, Sept. 12, 1842.

Lindenwald, if Blair thought the visit would not injure the political influence of the *Globe,* but Blair did not accept Van Buren's hospitality. Instead, he turned his face westward. There his son Montgomery had entered Benton's law office in St. Louis (1837), had established himself in practice, and had become United States Attorney for Missouri (1841), and Mayor of St. Louis (1842-43). Frank had gone to St. Louis in 1842 to practice law with Montgomery.[17] Betty Blair married in the spring of 1843, receiving a sound scolding from Van Buren for not inviting him to her wedding. Both of the young Blairs had professed the political faith of Benton and purposed to share his fortune in politics. The year in which Frank arrived in St. Louis as a prospective lawyer, young Payson Treat began his anti-Benton war by publishing an article in the Missouri *Reporter* in which he asserted the right of individuals to think as they pleased on public affairs. Treat aimed the article directly at Benton, who stopped his subscription to the *Reporter* the day after the publication of the article. The anti-Benton war involved the Blairs, who sympathized with Benton, and it continued until Benton's downfall.

Blair had not been in Kentucky for thirteen years. He had promised almost annually to visit Jackson. So while the dark clouds were gathering in the political sky, he found sufficient reasons to visit his sons, Jackson, and his old friends in Kentucky. There were party welfare and personal affairs to be discussed with Jackson, who was financially distressed because of the reckless expenditures of his adopted son. In 1841 the Whig press circulated the news that Jackson was bankrupt. This bit of information was denied by Donelson, who stoutly maintained that Jackson could close out with $100,000 untouched. Nevertheless, Jackson was forced to borrow $10,000 of Blair and Rives. The amount was increased as Jackson became more deeply involved. Probably no loan was ever more cheerfully made. Blair and Rives endeavored in every possible way to save Jackson from pain while they kept his lands from being sold.

As an expression of his deep affection, Jackson sent Blair one of the best-bred young fillies from his stables. She was the pride

[17] Rogers, *op. cit.,* 69; Bay, *op. cit.,* 394; John Fiske, *The Mississippi Valley in the Civil War* (New York, 1900), 8; The *Globe,* Dec. 30, 1840.

of Jackson's heart, and Blair called her Miss Emuckfau. Blair sent Jackson a walking-stick that could be transformed into a three-legged stool. Jackson could not be outdone in fine generosity; he presented Blair with a hickory cane which still remains in the possession of the Blair family.

The engraving on the head of the cane was emblematic of the *Globe* and was a complement of a similar engravure on the watch which Blair wore, and which has descended in his family. The cane was used by Jackson when he observed the architect painstakingly surveying the land for the Treasury Building. Becoming exasperated at the architect's deliberate methods, Jackson slammed down his cane, exclaiming: "By the Eternal, right here I want the corner stone!" According to the story, there rests the stone.[18]

During the winter and spring of 1842-43, Kendall and Blair fell into dispute. The incident proved to be a strong test of Jackson's and Van Buren's friendship for Blair. Newsmongers and the desire of Kendall to secure the printing of Congress were the chief causes for the quarrel between them. Kendall wrote a letter to Van Buren in which he criticized the course of Blair as editor of the *Globe,* and Van Buren forwarded the letter to Blair. Kendall thought that the *Globe* should openly support Van Buren and cease attacking Tyler. The course pursued by Blair, said Kendall, endangered the political future of Van Buren by forcing together the Calhoun and Tyler factions. Kendall made a secret trip to New York which Blair learned was to connive against him. Blair engaged Kendall in a correspondence which failed to result in an amicable understanding. He then turned to Jackson as a mediator, for he feared that Kendall might undermine his standing with Jackson. He wrote Jackson that Wright and Van Buren had seen the correspondence between him and Kendall, and that Wright thought he had said "only what circumstances fully justified." Blair believed that Kendall hoped to defeat him for printer by breaking with him and pleading poverty and persecution. Realizing that a breach between him and Kendall would injure the party, he asked Jackson what he should do.

Jackson had supposed that the friendship between Blair and

[18] Edna M. Coleman, *Seventy-five Years of White House Gossip* (Garden City, 1925), 169.

Kendall could not be shaken. He heartily wished with Blair that the misunderstanding would end with the correspondence which Blair had sent to him to read. He could see nothing that Blair had to regret, only that Kendall had listened to idle gossip. He advised Blair to "let it die and rest in oblivion." He felt certain that Kendall would soon regret that he had listened to the tales upon which he based his charges of breach of friendship against Blair.[19]

The Blair-Kendall controversy seemed to be near an end before Blair visited Jackson. Blair informed Wright that he indulged in the happy feelings that a restoration of friendship would soon be effected between himself and Kendall. "I met him," said Blair, "casually the other day at Dr. Linn's room and from the impulse of habitual kindness towards him, gave him my hand. If he entertains the same disposition towards me that I do towards him, time, I think, will satisfy him, the information on which he proceeded in opening the late unpleasant correspondence between us was not well founded; and I trust that time will also show that I was mistaken in the motives I attributed to him." Blair was willing to restore old friendship and trust. Jackson rejoiced at the good news and looked forward to a discussion of the subject when Blair reached the Hermitage.[20]

Blair made his visit to the West while times were dull in Washington, and while he was engaged in his campaign of preaching neutrality and harmony. He had published letters from each of the prospective Democratic candidates setting forth their views on pressing questions of the day. There were many important personal and public topics for discussion with Jackson. First he visited his sons in St. Louis. From St. Louis he went to Nashville, where he was met by Judge Catron and wife, who took him to the Hermitage on May 13, 1843. There Jackson welcomed him as he might have received a long-absent son. They attended church together; Blair wrote a graphic description of Jackson and the Hermitage for the *Globe*. On his way home Blair visited friends in Lexington and Frankfort, where Whigs and Democrats alike greeted him.[21]

The visit was suspected by anti-Van Buren supporters as being

[19] Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Jan. 17, 1843.
[20] *Ibid.*, Blair to Wright, Feb. 20, 1843; Jackson to Blair, Mar. 2, 1843.
[21] The *Globe*, May 23, June 26, 28, 30, 1843.

actuated by ulterior motives. Blair was supposed to have gone to St. Louis to establish a branch of the *Globe* to kill the press of Shadrach Penn and ruin the chances of Calhoun for the nomination, to hoist the flag of Van Buren and Benton, and to draw Jackson into the campaign in support of Van Buren. To these accusations Blair offered a flat denial. He declared that Jackson had already freely expressed himself as favoring Van Buren for President.

Blair now stood more firmly for Van Buren, offering an occasional defense for Calhoun, and frankly opposing Tyler. Calhoun saw, however, that he needed a press like the *Globe* or the *Enquirer* to devote its full time to his interests. The Charleston *Mercury* sought to draw out Ritchie and Blair by asking them whether Benton would support Calhoun if he were nominated. The editors carefully passed the responsibility on to Benton, who was receiving considerable opposition from the friends of Calhoun in Missouri.[22] Kendall, still playing for the Congressional printing, continued to oppose Blair on the assumption that Blair had lent a willing ear to gossip about him. He proposed to Van Buren to organize his forces immediately and to cause Blair to change his course toward Tyler and Calhoun. He would force Blair to avow frankly his preference; he knew that Johnson men were sanguine; reports were that Woodbury had consented to run with Johnson; Blair was playing politics to gain Calhoun's support for the printing; every day made him more apprehensive that they could not harmonize with the friends of Calhoun and that they would have to get along without him.[23]

Kendall wrote that he had refused to be led away from Van Buren. His private circumstances were hard. His family lived in an unfinished frame house and subsisted on coarse rations. He proposed to live that way rather than be dishonest or leave a name dishonored. But if the party would give him the printing, or a part of it, the work would be very acceptable. He wanted New York to stop playing with the Whigs, and he promised Van Buren that he would not enter into a controversy with the *Globe*.

While Kendall was urging Van Buren to influence Blair, he

[22] *Ibid.*, July 5, 8, 14, 15, 17, Aug. 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, Sept. 13, 16, 18, 22, 26, 27, 29, Oct. 2, 12, 27, 1843; Jackson MSS., M. Blair to Jackson, Nov. 20, 1843.

[23] Van Buren MSS. Kendall to John Van Buren, May 2, 1843; Kendall to Van Buren, Aug. 20, 1843.

was writing the *Life of General Jackson,* destined never to be completed, but described by the *Globe* as the coming work of the day. The first part of it was on sale at the book stores. Kendall had set himself up as a patent, pension, and accountant agent to gain a livelihood. Blair resented his interference in the race for printer. Jackson wrote a letter in defense of Blair's right to the printing. He could not see the *Globe* struck down. Blair and Rives were elected, to Kendall's great loss and Tyler's disgust. Why Kendall did not have money, Blair could not understand. He discovered that Kendall had received $48,000 for salary from the government, $29,000 for his services for the *Globe,* and Henshaw had given him lands valued at $30,000 for his influence in getting their speculations on the Choctaws and Chickasaws through the loan office. Blair was then standing security for Kendall to the amount of $4,000, half of which he was going to have to pay in a few days for Kendall.[24]

The *Globe,* thankful to the party for the printership to Congress, promised to submit to the will of the masses. Blair supported Polk and his program. The subject of taxation was stressed as the important measure before Congress. A supposed last word was given to Tyler in December, 1843, and Blair urged the people to send their delegates instructed to the National Convention in 1844. He entered the eventful year of 1844 advocating union and harmony and denouncing Clay, abolition, and British influence.

4

The year opened with spirited attacks on the Whig party. Clay once more received the brunt of the onslaught, while Webster came in for a portion. Blair had concluded that his own party men of the North preferred a Vice-President from the Southwest. He assured Jackson that Van Buren did not want Calhoun on the ticket with him, and that either King of Alabama or Polk of Tennessee were singularly qualified for the place.[25] A series of articles favoring King and Polk were published in the *Globe.* Polk, who was quite active in his own behalf, thought that he

[24] Jackson MSS. Blair to Jackson, Dec. 6, 16, 1843; Coleman, *Life of Crittenden,* II, 211.

[25] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Dec. 16, 1843, and Wright to Blair, Dec. 18, 1843; the *Globe* for January, 1844.

was not given equal favor with King and thenceforth disliked Blair.[26]

The *Globe* at last entered upon its critical period from which Blair failed to extricate it as a living organ. A period of silence on the subjects of Oregon and Texas had to be broken. The *Globe* began to speak out on reoccupation and annexation about the time Buchanan and Calhoun withdrew from the race for the presidency. Curiously, Polk heartily approved the course of Tyler in appointing Calhoun as Secretary of State. Just when Blair was on the eve of attacking Calhoun, Polk prepared to compromise with Calhoun on political subjects by remaining silent on the policy of the administration. Polk was receiving favorable attention from his party and he wanted the nomination for Vice-President. It is interesting to note that Robert J. Walker of Mississippi, who was to use his "fine Italian hand" in bringing about the fall of the *Globe,* refused to allow the use of his name for a vice-presidential candidate by his adopted state, and gave Polk his support.[27]

Blair never wavered in his policy of advocating the reoccupation of Oregon. He hoped that out of party chaos would come a nomination of Van Buren, and he had no fear of the movement for annexation of new territory. He proposed to terminate at once the joint occupation of Oregon by the United States and Great Britain. He asked the House of Representatives to speak out on this question, which was fast becoming one of the first magnitude. *Mexico As It Was, and As It Is,* by Mayer, was advertised for sale at Taylor's bookstore. The Hutchinson Family, singers and musicians, were singing and selling *Westward Ho!,* and Walker's letter on the annexation of Texas was published in the *Globe.* Blair could not allow the opportunity to present such a mass of useful facts on Texas to pass.

While the Democrats in the House were rejoicing over a vote of 158 to 28 to refund Jackson's Hall Case fine with interest, Blair sat down to write to Jackson (Jan. 9, 1844) about the serious situation in Texas. He had not heard of any decisive action there and confessed that he was apprehensive that all was not right in that

[26] The *Globe,* Jan. 8, 19, 22, Feb. 5, 1844; The *Tennessee Historical Magazine,* I, 232-34.

[27] The *Globe,* Dec. 13, 26, 1843; Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 1844.

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country. The Secretary of State and the *Chargé d'Affaires* for Texas had been waiting six weeks for authority to make a treaty of annexation. The Secretary had informed Blair that things looked "very English" in Texas. He begged Jackson to write to Houston, who he feared might be disposed to listen to England. Blair had no doubt that Texas wanted to be annexed to the United States.[28]

Then the *Globe* again became shy of the delicate Texan situation. Blair lapsed into silence on the question in his correspondence with Jackson and gave himself up to enjoying a celebration of the Democratic victory over the passage of the Hall Fine bill. Democratic Senators and friends of Blair's dined at the Blair home (February 11) in honor of the occasion. On February 16, the *Globe* prodded the House for its slowness on the Oregon question and compared the objects of the two countries in their attempts to gain possession of the territory. In sum, England wanted Oregon to exploit the fur industry while the United States had the highest and noblest purpose in the world—"To give room to the progress of civilized and Christian men; to increase and multiply the fruits of the earth—to appropriate the works of God to the great purposes for which, by his own express declarations, they were originally intended, and to carry into effect the decrees of His providence." Blair believed that England could not afford to fight for the territory in dispute.

The Democratic National Convention was to be held in Baltimore in May. The Blair-Benton-Wright-Van Buren group needed all shoulders at the wheel. But tribulations befell them. Montgomery Blair's wife died January 11. She was the lovable daughter of fond and affectionate parents who had lost her sisters in death by the same cause—childbirth. She was "mild, ingenious, and lively in her manners and disposition"—charitable, and patient. Soon after this bereavement Benton was injured in the famous *Princeton* explosion. He was unable to return to the Senate chamber until March 19. Shadrach Penn of St. Louis made strong efforts to injure Benton politically. Blair wrote to Jackson to defend Benton, but Jackson's life was gradually ebbing away. And Blair in the unhappiest of moments fell ill with an infected ear

[28] Jackson MSS. Blair to Jackson, Jan. 9, 1844; The *Globe*, Feb. 15, 1844; Gillet, *op. cit.*, 1332.

and a rising on his backbone which incapacitated him for duty until after the Texas question was too far along to prevent the sacrifice of Van Buren at Baltimore. Blair's doctor refused to allow him to write editorials or discuss policies during the greater part of his illness.[29] This accounts for the vacillating policy of the *Globe* which many historians have failed to understand.

During his painful and exasperating sickness Blair was urged by Jackson to lend his aid to effect the annexation of Texas. He considered it the most important measure for the safety and growing prosperity of the Union, and particularly of the South and West. It was high time, in his estimation, to secure the safety of New Orleans, and guarantee the West against Indian raids. Texas was to be used to save Oregon and protect our Western states. A treaty should be made and laid before the Senate at once to avoid jeopardizing the Union.[30]

Resolutions introduced into the Pennsylvania legislature by the anti-annexationists were defeated by a close vote. The question had become a burning issue in and out of Congress. A letter of Woodbury's was published in which he explained that he saw no constitutional objections to annexation. The friends of Blair who were editing the *Globe* for him declared that the people of the United States must stand with heads erect and refuse to cringe before Great Britain. They wanted victory in Oregon as well as at Baltimore. But they were at a loss as to what to do with Texas. The *Globe* prudently kept silent about Texas and fell to reviling Clay—there no mistake could be made. The *Spectator,* however, came forth with a strong condemnation of the Yankees. The South loved the Union, it asserted, but the Southerners could not stand the continued perversion of all that was righteous and true in government. The South would "start up, and when an earthquake yawns and rocks, and above the wild tumult" the North would hear the cry of "In the Union, or out of the Union, Texas shall be ours."[31]

Still unable to resume his editorial duties, Blair asked for an amanuensis to write an editorial favorable to annexation (April 15). That was done. The *Globe* appeared in its Texas dress, bas-

[29] The *Globe,* Apr. 15, 26, 1844; Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, Apr. 12, 1844.
[30] Jackson MSS. Jackson to Blair, Apr. 12, 1844.
[31] The *Spectator,* Apr. 3, 1844.

ing its argument on the ground that our commissioners of 1819 had illegally signed away Texas and that it was still a territory of the United States.

The *Globe* said the claims of Mexico should be conciliated as far as possible to avoid any dishonorable conduct. Mexico would very probably be glad to have a just and amicable settlement. England, too, was hankering after Texas and hoped to influence the coming election. The "English organ" (*National Intelligencer*), Webster, and other Whigs had already declared against annexation and sought to make the question a political issue. Blair was too ill to proof-read this article; and he later insisted that it was published after the *Globe* understood the treaty for annexation was signed with Texas.[82] The Texas treaty was held back. While the Senate sat behind closed doors, the *Globe* asked the people to support the appeal from the Texan Congress for annexation (April 17). Blair was thus committed to annexation. On April 20 Van Buren wrote his fatal letter in reply to an inquiry of W. H. Hammet of Mississippi.

Van Buren reviewed his policy toward Mexico and Texas in 1837. He saw no change in the state of affairs to justify him in a change of attitude, no reason for fear that we might lose the Texans of American blood through our delay, no danger from European interference. But he promised that if a situation arose while he was responsible as President of the United States, he would meet it with a desire to produce the result best calculated to advance the permanent welfare of the whole country. He furthermore promised to abide by the decision of Congress and the people if he were chosen President.[83]

The *Globe* published Clay's letter, in which he expressed his opposition to annexation, on the same day that Van Buren's letter was published. The stand taken by Clay was not a surprise to the country, but Van Buren threw a bomb into the Democratic camp that changed the "Jackson Jubilee" spirit to fear and anger. Blair had the Van Buren letter read to him as he lay in bed. John C. Rives offered Hammet $100 for the manuscript copy.

Blair, roused to action in spite of his illness, wrote a short editorial on the two letters of Clay and Van Buren. Assuming that

[82] The *Globe*, Apr. 15, 16, 17, 26, 1844. [83] *Ibid.*, Apr. 27, 1844.

annexation was a mere matter of time, he did not think that Van Buren had ever presented to the country a production more creditable to his talents, his patriotism, or his character as a statesman. He was convinced that the argument which Van Buren advanced against instant annexation had for its foundation a principle which no statesman could overlook. He had no doubt of the ultimate annexation of Texas, but it should be done without a violation of our treaty obligations, and without the material disturbance to the peace and harmony of the Union. He made a noble effort to save Van Buren from defeat at Baltimore.

The reply of Benton to the Texan Congressmen was published in the *Globe* on April 29. His letter contained argument for a delay until Mexico recognized the independence of Texas, and he pleaded for the freedom of the subject from sectional views, partisan politics, and selfish, personal, and sordid schemes. The *Globe* solemnly pronounced him a wise and patriotic statesman.

Politicians in the Southwest were unwilling to follow Van Buren, Benton, and Blair on the Texas question. They sought this opportunity to defeat the free-soil element in their party. To S. P. Chase of Ohio (April 23), Polk had written strongly in favor of annexing Texas. On April 29, Williamson Smith urged Polk to declare himself in favor of annexing Texas. The next day Cave Johnson told Polk that a third man might be needed to run for President.[34] Polk wrote again on May 4 that he still hoped Van Buren would take a position for annexation. But Nicholson of Columbia, Tennessee, informed Major J. P. Heiss of the Nashville *Union* that Van Buren's letter produced such a prostrating and cooling effect upon the Democrats there that it appeared as if they had disbanded. The letter had given them the pretext which they had been looking for—to declare against Van Buren. He did not believe that Van Buren could be nominated, and hoped that "surely, surely, surely it will not be done." He advised Heiss to declare that the *Union* stood for annexation regardless of the action of others.[35]

Jackson wrote Blair that the Democrats in Nashville were in sackcloth and ashes. He went for immediate annexation before

[34] St. George L. Sioussat, "Polk-Johnson Letters," in *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 238. *Vide* the footnote by Sioussat, 239.

[35] *Ibid.*, A. O. P. Nicholson to Maj. J. P. Heiss, May 8, 1844.

Texas was lost, after which he believed it would have to be taken from England at the point of the bayonet. He had prayed to God that he might have been allowed to sit at Van Buren's elbow to help him draw a proper conclusion to his letter. The South and West were lost to Van Buren unless they could be organized and pass resolutions for annexation to which Van Buren must subscribe before a nomination were made.[36] Before the day was over Jackson wrote a second letter to Blair on the Texas question. He had shed tears over the letters of Van Buren and Benton. He knew Shadrack Penn would viciously attack Benton in Missouri and that it was impossible to unite the Democracy on Van Buren. No man who would not pledge himself for immediate annexation could be elected. The letter which Calhoun wrote to Pakenham in which the subject of slavery was injected was sincerely regretted by Jackson. It would cause the East to oppose annexation. "How many men of talents want good common sense," he lamented. He assured Blair that he would not desert Van Buren for Tyler, but he was thinking of "Col Poke." Jackson brooded over the situation a week and inquired of Blair if Benton had not influenced Van Buren. Or, had Van Buren's common judgment been absent for the moment when he wrote the Texas letter?[37]

On May 12 Polk was in Nashville to visit Jackson at the urgent solicitation of General Armstrong and Major Donelson. He appeared at the Hermitage, May 13, where Jackson told him that Van Buren must be shelved. Polk's friends were urging him to throw his hat into the ring for first place instead of the second to which he had aspired. The *Globe* had kept coolly loyal to Van Buren and pooh-poohed any false alarms about Van Buren being unable to carry the election. Polk, however, was reasonably sure that no anti-annexationist could carry the South and Southwest. Clay would hold many of his Whigs, but Whigs who desired the possession of Texas could be won only by a man other than Van Buren, and one who favored immediate annexation.[38]

Blair had now recovered enough of his strength to write a strong endorsement of Van Buren's proposal to recover Texas as

[36] Jackson MSS. Jackson to Blair, May 11, 1844.
[37] *Ibid.*, Second letter of Jackson to Blair; also, May 18, 1844.
[38] Sioussat, *op. cit.*, 239-41, Polk to Cave Johnson, May 4, 1844; The *Globe*, Apr. 30, 1844.

soon as it could be done without taking part in an actual war between Mexico and Texas. He thus broke political ties with immediate annexationists, and threatened to give Tyler and Calhoun their deserts as soon as he could. He began his defense of Van Buren by attacking the administration on its Texan policy. Benton's old articles on the subject were republished to show that he had long been an expansionist. An appeal was made to the pride and patriotism of the people; they must hold to the principle expressed in: "Our Federal Union: it must be preserved."

Blair hung tenaciously to Van Buren, whose chances for the nomination weakened rapidly a few days before the Baltimore convention. The *Globe* stoutly opposed the Tyler treaty, which was declared to be an instrument of deviltry. The question appeared to the *Globe* as one of annexation or disunion. Letters from men who were announcing in favor of annexation flowed steadily into the *Globe* office. The Whig Baltimore Convention of May 2 chose Clay as the standard bearer of the party. He retired to Ashland to conduct a dignified campaign. A letter of Polk's announcing for immediate annexation was published in the *Globe,* May 6, and on the same day Blair severely arraigned Calhoun. Blair scorned the notorious Duff Green and thoughtlessly hurt the feelings of Ritchie,[39] who wanted Texas annexed at once. Blair had pled for a strict observance of instructions by the delegates at the coming convention, but his plea was not heeded. He explained that Van Buren could and would accept Texas as soon as the armistice between that country and Mexico expired, which undoubtedly would happen before November, 1844. He reëxplained Van Buren's letter as being favorable to the idea of the constitutionality of the annexation of Texas; he affirmed his intention to support the nominee at Baltimore; he denounced Calhoun (for thirteen years an enemy of Van Buren) as a selfish sacrificer of the South, an intriguer in league with Rhett to use the *Spectator* to ruin the *Globe,* and a selfish dallier with slavery to trap men in our domestic affairs. Nevertheless, he was forced to continue publishing letters of Cass, of Woodbury, and of others who were getting on the Texan band-wagon.[40]

[39] The *Globe,* May 4, 6, 7, 8, 1844. Also Mar. 1, Apr. 4, 1844.
[40] *Ibid.,* May 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 1844.

The story of the Baltimore convention is an old one. The Texas letter and the passage of the two-thirds majority rule to nominate a candidate ruined Van Buren's chance for success. Polk became the first dark horse. He was pledged to immediate annexation. The work had been skillfully done in the convention by Walker and the annexationists. It was reasonable for Blair to oppose the two-thirds rule as a diabolical plot to subvert the wishes of the people. The withdrawal of Van Buren to prevent party strife was appropriately and rightly commended. The nomination of Polk was a disappointment, but a judicious selection which was necessary to save the party. Blair enumerated some of the reasons which reconciled him to the selection of Polk instead of his favorite, Van Buren. He was, however, visibly hurt. True to his promise, Blair brought the *Globe* out for Polk and Dallas May 30 and 31. "Everything for the cause, nothing for men," was run at the head of the editorial column.

The sting of defeat is evidenced in Blair's letter to Van Buren:[41]

> The corrupted intriguers have succeeded so far as to defect us but it will only be temporary chagrin we suffer while immediate disappointment and lasting anathema & disgrace is all they have gained. Their only object & hope from the first was that in killing you off now they would kill off Benton for '48, and to do this they have taken Polk *in praesentia* (as he is infinitely more disagreeable to them, instead of one whom they are compelled to like & respect in spite of their selfishness. I predict that these knaves who have thus gratified themselves at this moment to profit hereafter, are doomed to experience the grief of the Eagle that found his feathers on the shaft that killed him. The wrong now done by them in your person to the people, will add to the feeling sown throughout the country by the fraud & injustice of 1840. If I may judge from my own heart, which I have always found a pretty good index of the popular heart it will redouble & harden the feeling in the country, which can never be satisfied or softened without retribution. They see this result already & seek by nominating Mr. Wright as V. P. to prevent it. I am glad he declines it.
>
> In the close of my editorial notice of the Baltimore doings, I have purposely given our dear old friend the General [Jackson] a twinge. He has allowed his patriotic ardor about Texas to outrun every other feeling. He has been in correspondence with Houston and his exaggerated statements at first imposed on him & then committed him to

[41] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, May 30, 1844.

the Treaty so absolutely that he could not retract with honor. He confidently believed you would go with him as I did that you would go with me. He is made of sterner stuff than I am. In reply to a letter I wrote urging the Armistice as an obstacle that could not be decently disregarded, he writes back to me "What did the Armistice do? It suspected the sort of war existing before it. A war of marauders which nations are bound to put down like that of pirates—not a war which nations are bound to respect as creating a state of relations with which none must interfere by making a treaty with the injured party." The old man had written so many *driving* letters to me on this subject to show to Senators, that in the last he is obliged to tell me you must not "suspect from all this that I am going to be a deserter from Van Buren"—I shall write to him in a day or two & tell him my thoughts on the new state of affairs. Polk will be obliged to take your ground although he is our immediate man. Texas can never come in but with the consent of the people of the U. S. A. assisted by a popular vote. I made that my turning row against the Treaty. I wish you had stood upon that point in your letter and left the paper blockade where I put it. Mexico thus put out of the question, you would have carried the whole south like a flash and all the great states of the north. I should have been spared the bitter task [illegible] of the present hour & the prospect before me of up-hill, reluctant labor for this campaign & may be for 4 years beyond. I feel strongly inclined to fling up the Globe and give myself to my "farm & carters."

Why did Van Buren write the Texas letter? It is evident that it marked the turning point in his campaign. He was a losing candidate thereafter. Van Buren was at Lindenwald, his home near Albany. He was naturally influenced by the Northern situation. Resentment at Southern dominance in politics had been welling up in his breast since 1842.[42] Many of the conservatives in New York were disaffected because of his tariff views and the Independent Treasury. The radical Democrats were winking at Calhoun. Wright was, next to Benton, the closest friend to Blair and the dearest friend of Van Buren's. He firmly believed that Calhoun had determined to rule or ruin, and that no man from a free state dared to support the treaty which Tyler made with Texas. Buchanan, Cass, Marcy, and Woodbury were Northern competitors who quite willingly flirted with the South. The Whig party was everywhere shouting enthusiastically for Clay, and Tyler was not beyond intriguing with any faction to gain success. A majority of the delegates who had been chosen to go

[42] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Sept. 12, 1842.

to the Baltimore Democratic convention were instructed for Van Buren."[43] If the delegates respected their instructions, he was assured a nomination on the majority rule basis.

The letter was not, as many historians have taken for granted, an outright refusal to annex Texas. At no time did Van Buren or Blair refuse to annex Texas. It was a question of time. Van Buren promised to be guided by the will of the people and Congress. Duff Green struck the popular chord when he proposed to put away Van Buren for a third man. That was what many politicians wanted. The letter gave them an opportunity to do it. They needed, too, an issue more clearly drawn than could be made between Van Buren's and Clay's letters."[44] They did not purpose to have Van Buren in power to guide the method of accepting Texas.

The last, but by no means the least important, cause for the Texas letter was the extension of slavery. Van Buren was confident that he could prove that his Texas letter was not the controlling element in his defeat at Baltimore, if the game were worth the candle. He thought Jackson had become obsessed with the one idea of fighting the British and Mexicans. Van Buren believed that the cause of his defeat lay in a "war waged for the acknowledged or known purpose of extending or perpetuating slavery." Save us from that, he said to Blair, and the Democrats are in no danger at the North."[45] His correspondence with Blair is tinctured with this controlling idea until the two men went off into free-soilism in 1848.

Blair's heart was heavy, but he labored to defeat the Whig candidate; Van Buren proved loyal to the cause of his party and took defeat like a gentleman, though he did think Polk was a "mole."

5

The defeat of Van Buren left the *Globe* in a serious predicament. It had endorsed Van Buren's program as set forth in his letter as strongly as it could. Blair rejoiced in the refusal of the

[43] Herbert D. A. Donovan, *The Barnburners* (New York, 1925), 53-54; Gillet, *op. cit.*, II, 1517-18.

[44] Justin Harvey Smith, *The Annexation of Texas* (New York, 1911), 238.

[45] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Oct. 5, 1844; Feb. 11, 1845; Dec. 11, 1848; Apr. 6, 1849; Blair to Van Buren, Jan. 11, Mar. 3, 1848.

nomination for Vice-President by Wright, who agreed heartily with Van Buren's Texas letter.[46] About the only thing the *Globe* could say as it tried to promote the cause of Polk was that it was fighting for a noble cause, a great party, and that it refused to lose through strife about men. It believed the noble example set by Van Buren to cure the divisions in the ranks of the Democracy was effective and salutary—even magical.

Polk did not lend himself as readily as others to stirring editorials. Blair therefore resorted to an extensive use of excerpts on Polk and Dallas and devoted his editorial columns largely to other matters during the campaign. He rejoiced at the defeat of the treaty by the Senate. Benton, Wright, and Allen of Ohio voted against it with the Whigs; Buchanan, Atchison, McDuffie, Walker, and Woodbury voted for it. Blair endorsed Benton's annexation bill which was offered as a substitute for the treaty, explaining as he did so that a conciliating and indemnifying policy toward Mexico was advisable. The *Globe* professed a desire to see Congress adopt a measure for annexation before it adjourned. Then by the election of Polk popular sanction could be had on it.

Blair and Benton were drawn into a heated controversy with A. V. Brown, a close friend of Polk's, and Rhett, an intimate friend of Calhoun's, over annexation and the *Spectator*. Benton questioned the friendship which Brown claimed he had for Van Buren, and accused him of having vicariously obtained the Jackson letter on Texas which counteracted that of Van Buren's and caused his defeat at Baltimore. Benton, in the heat of the moment, characterized the motives of some of the leaders who fostered the movement for Texas by treaty as being tainted with a desire to dissolve the Union and to speculate in land.[47] Blair accused Calhoun of being directly responsible for South Carolina's disunion sentiment. This arch-conspirator was supposedly consolidating Southern political influences in his own interests and Blair hoped the friends of Polk would shun any combination with Calhoun. Blair cannot be condemned for suspecting Calhoun of being acquainted with the secession movement in South Carolina. A

[46] Gillet, *op. cit.*, II, 1520-21. Wright to Russell, June 17, 1844.

[47] The *Globe*, June 13, 1844; Eugene Irving McCormac, *James K. Polk, A Political Biography* (Berkeley, 1922), 257.

Pickens, a Yancy, and a Brooks at the Edgefield meeting and two Rhetts at the Beaufort meeting were enough to excite suspicion. The *Spectator* viciously attacked Blair as an aid to abolition, to Great Britain, and a dangerous character in his "perfidious and nefarious policy." It hotly informed Blair that the South would be found equal to the vindication of its liberties.[48] Blair could not tolerate the *Spectator* after it took its stand for Texas "in the Union or out of the Union," and had his subscription to it discontinued to save his nerves. Before the controversy progressed far it was disclosed that Rhett had raised money to prolong the life of the *Spectator* to support Calhoun and Tyler.

Polk was greatly perturbed over the trend of affairs. He disliked the idea of criticizing the disloyal meetings in South Carolina as the *Globe* was doing. He did not regard the sentiments expressed there as being indicative of the feelings of the South and proposed a national convention which men from all over the Union were to attend. This, he thought, would counteract any movement for a sectional convention which would produce enmity between the South and the North. One of the friends of Polk told him that Benton and the *Globe* had done more harm to the party in eighteen months than had the whole of the Whig press. Jackson was much excited over the report that Benton had taken the hand of Adams, saying, "We are both old men, we must now unite and save the constitution." If that report were true, Jackson wanted no better proof of Benton's derangement. He begged Blair not to permit Benton to control the *Globe,* for he was certain that Benton had prostrated himself politically. Polk and Jackson believed that Benton had influenced Van Buren to write the Texas letter. The *Globe* then came out with Benton's letter which denied any allegation that Polk and Dallas were any more than victims of the intrigues at Baltimore. Blair followed this letter with one from Jackson on the same subject, and defended Polk on his tariff policy and taxation; he defended Polk against personal abuse, and published all of the reports from Democratic meetings in the Union which space permitted. Old

[48] The *Charleston Courier,* June 13, 14, 15, 1844; The *Globe,* June 3, 15, 22, 1844; The *Spectator,* June 13, 17, 1844.

charges against Clay were resurrected. At the same time the *Spectator* and the Missouri *Reporter* made some of their hottest attacks on Blair and Benton.[49] Compromise and peace between the Blair-Benton-Wright-Van Buren and the Tyler-Calhoun-Polk factions was now probably beyond attainment. Each fully distrusted the other.

An attempt was made to promote harmony by holding a Democratic convention at Nashville near the Hermitage. Jackson invited Blair to attend. Blair urged all who could attend to go catch the spirit of "the man of the Hermitage." His duties as editor kept him at his post. Polk began to complain of the indifference of Blair. He had suspected Blair of coldness to him since the beginning of the vice-presidential race. Dallas aggravated Polk's fears. Polk wanted Donelson to write a plain letter to Blair and, if Jackson were physically able, asked that he write to Blair a strong letter in his own handwriting.[50] Polk wrote to Jackson asking that Blair be stopped from his attacks on Tyler. At the time the *Globe* was defending the good name of Polk's grandfather, who had been charged with having been a Tory. On July 24, the *Globe* pronounced Polk eminently fit for President, and two days later Jackson told Blair that the defeat of the treaty by the Senate was a humiliating spectacle—a degrading event which no true American could view without remorse and shame; that he should support the cause of Polk and Dallas, let Tyler alone, and leave Calhoun to himself.[51] Blair obeyed in the case of Tyler, continued the use of excerpts to support Polk and Dallas, and flayed the Whigs. Much ado was made over the Nashville convention at which Cave Johnson presided. Frank Blair was to attend the convention and visit the Hermitage.[52] A hickory pole was erected in front of the *Globe* office during an

[49] Sioussat, *op. cit.*, III, 57-58, Polk to A. J. Donelson, June 22, 1844. Consult McCormac, *op. cit.*, 257, 264-73. *Vide* Jackson MSS., Jackson to Blair, June 25, 1844. The *Globe*, June 26, 28, July 6, 11, 23, 1844.

[50] Sioussat, *op. cit.*, III, 57-58; Polk to A. J. Donelson, July 22, 1844; The *Globe*, July 17, 1844.

[51] The *Globe*, July 23, 24, 1844; Francis Preston Blair, Sr., *A Voice From the Grave of Jackson* (Washington, 1856), 28; Jackson MSS., Polk to Jackson, July 23, 1844, Jackson to Blair, July 26, 1844.

[52] The *Globe*, July 31, Aug. 1, 2, 3, 6, 24, 26, 1844; Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Aug. 4, 1844, and Jackson to Blair, Aug. 29, 1844.

enthusiastic Democratic meeting in Washington. The following lines were read during the ceremony, and greeted with shouts and cheers: [58]

> To the fair wind your banner fling,
> With "no Bank" let the welkin ring;
> No Distribution o'er our boat,
> But "Polk and Dallas," proudly float,
> And "Texas" to be the rallying shout
> Around the Hickory Tree.

Blair seemed to become somewhat more enthusiastic as the campaign progressed. He wrote Jackson that he went in for immediate Congressional annexation as the most feasible, safest, and least objectionable method of securing Texas. But he asked Jackson to prevent any combination between Polk and Calhoun. Why? "It would suit Mr. Calhoun's aims to have Clay and the Tariff and the Anti-Texas party to fight against rather than Colo Polk's administration to fight for unless it could be made entirely subservient to his views and then he would have it break with the Northern Democracy and go into the schemes of 'resistance.'" Secondly, "federalism would seek to blend Colo Polk with the disunion threats of the South Carolinian Conspirators." Though promising to allow Calhoun a respite, he was not satisfied with the conditions. "Have no fear of my following Benton out of the Democratic ranks," he assured Jackson, "even should he go—which is not [at] all likely—I backed water a little for Mr. Van Buren to bring him finally into your Texas ship—but much as I respect him, I would not have surrendered the question for his sake have delayed it even— But I saw it could not go through the Senate soon and therefore, was willing to wait for him to come up as he would have done." Professing continued love and admiration for Jackson, Blair told him the Tyler administration was rotten to the core; Jackson was equally as thoughtful, and told Blair that Tyler had promised to resign as the nominee of his third party, and had complained of the abuse at the hands of him and Benton. Jackson wanted Tyler brought back to the party to save Ohio and votes elsewhere. Benton was ruined, and the

[58] The *Globe*, Aug. 24, 27, 1844.

Globe almost ruined in Tennessee.[54] Blair and Jackson again agreed with each other on Texas; Blair continued to defend Benton and Van Buren, and Jackson decided that they could come back to the Democracy.[55]

The friends of Polk proposed in June, 1844, that a newspaper friendly to the Southern wing of the Democracy be substituted for the *Globe*. Among those who connived against Blair were Tyler, Polk, Walker, General Armstrong, F. W. Pickens, Cave Johnson, Calhoun, Heiss, Rhett, Harris, and Cameron. Their object was to destroy the influence of the Blair-Benton-Van Buren wing of the Democracy. Throughout the year 1844 Rhett never relaxed his editorial war in the *Spectator* on Blair and Benton. Calhoun's friend Pickens interviewed Polk in August, 1844, and found him perfectly satisfactory as to principles and men. Friends of Polk managed to poison Jackson's mind against Benton and brought the old General to agree that Polk should run his own administration. Polk assured his mentor, Cave Johnson, that he

[54] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Aug. 4, 1844, Jackson to Blair, Aug. 15, 1844; Van Buren MSS., Blair to Van Buren, Sept. 13, 1844.

Blair tried to keep Benton and Jackson on friendly terms. The following letter expresses his concern over the danger of an estrangement between them. It is written to Van Buren, Sept. 13, 1844:

"I rec'd your very welcome letter a few days ago and was exceedingly gratified with its contents, including your advice to Colo Benton. I have observed a feeling of estrangement growing up between him & the General which the press of the enemies have been busily kindling to light in the bosom of each—the old feud. Your letter I think well calculated to allay the strong & stern resentments of the Colonel and I have followed up your view by writing to the General in a way to awaken that deep sense of gratitude that abides with him, by bringing his mind to bear first on the 25 years devotion Benton has given to the subject of embracing Texas in the Union—the disinterested & noble support he gave to his election & administration throughout, and the bold & vigorous manner in which he has since vindicated his measures & defended his fame. I speak of the affectionate interest which in your letters you take in his objects & speak of his happiness noble solicitude as to his relations with some friends & hint that it might be grateful to you, as it would be exceedingly to me, if he were to write a kind letter to the Colonel to visit him at the Hermitage. I hope the old Hero will improve my suggestion & bring Benton into consultation with him in regard to the accomplishment of the all engrossing matter which is literally I believe the very breath of his nostrils. I have received twenty long letters from him about this Texas affair—dating from the appearance of your letter— 'Oh that I had been at my friend Van Buren's elbow' is the prominent thought in the beginning. After the south took the matter in hand with a vengeance his regrets about your course gave way to a fulminating war on the *'Traitors'* [illegible]—bred of late (the violence of his disappointment abating) he sorrows over the misbehavior & mischief of *'our mutual friend* Colo Benton' and he is coming back to his first love with increased strength of feeling. He writes me 'Van Buren must be our next President.' "

[55] Jackson MSS. Jackson to Blair, Sept. 19, 28, Oct. 17, Nov. 13, 1844; the *Globe* for Sept., Oct., and Nov., 1844.

would have no presidential aspirants in his cabinet. He proposed to steer clear of cliques and to have a government paper free of any connection with any faction that was at war with another portion of the party. The particular faction that was not to be at war, however, was the free-soil element of the Democracy.[56]

A plan to merge the Calhoun *Spectator* and the Tyler *Madisonian* purposely to supplant the *Globe* was concocted in December, 1844. Friends of Calhoun and Tyler attempted this while Donelson was trying to bring about a conciliation between Jackson and Calhoun. Jackson denounced the scheme as the height of folly as soon as General Armstrong broached the subject to him. Next the friends of Polk proposed to elevate Ritchie of the Richmond *Enquirer* to Blair's station, leaving Blair in the background as a financial partner in the *Globe*. Jackson warned Blair to have nothing to do with such nefarious schemes. Blair promised Jackson that he would support Polk's administration without stint and "give the world an instance of an editor devoted to the true interests of the cause" even if the *Globe* were not the official organ.[57]

Through February and March, events concerning Blair and the *Globe* moved rapidly. Laughlin left Tennessee in February to take part in editing the *Madisonian,*[58] preparatory to consolidating it with the *Constitution*.

This plan of consolidation failed to materialize in a Polk organ. Jackson hastened to stop that movement, hoping to save Blair and the Democracy. On March 8, Blair wrote details to Jackson, who read the letter and burned it; on March 9, Donelson received a letter from Cameron, who proposed a new government organ with Donelson as editor. Cameron wrote that he was prompted to make the offer at the request of Walker, who was the brother-in-law of Polk. The President had expressed a desire for a new organ. Donelson refused to have anything to do with it because of his friendship for Blair, because of his fear that the party might be injured, and because it would be a denial of the

[56] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Sept. 9, 1844; Van Buren MSS., Blair to Van Buren, Sept. 13, 1844; McCormac, *op. cit.,* 164-65 and 264-73; *Calhoun Correspondence,* 968-71, Pickens to Calhoun, Sept. 9, 1844.

[57] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Dec. 22, 1844; Blair, *A Voice From the Grave of Jackson.* Jackson to Blair, Dec. 14, 1844.

[58] Blair, *A Voice From the Grave of Jackson,* Jackson to Blair, Feb. 28, Mar. 3, 1845.

correctness of the general policy of the *Globe,* with which he agreed.

The change in Polk toward the *Globe* was beyond the understanding of Jackson. The former had spent the night of January 30 with Jackson during which time Blair was a subject for conversation. Polk gave Jackson to understand that he as President would continue to employ the *Globe* as the official paper.[59] Consequently, when information reached Jackson that Polk contemplated a change of editors, Jackson, though panting for breath and soon to die, rose in defense of the man to whom he trusted his papers and the defense of his character and fame. By March 24 matters had come to a head.

President Polk misled Blair and Rives into believing that they were to be the official editors when he gave his inaugural address to them for publication. They were soon disillusioned, for Polk called Blair to his office on March 24 and told him that the *Globe* must have a new editor. Polk disregarded Blair's personal pride or pecuniary interests in the *Globe.* It was to be handed about as the party leaders might choose. Blair suppressed his humiliation and anger and promised to discontinue the *Globe* if Jackson and Van Buren so advised.[60]

On the 28th of March Polk begged Donelson to accept the business responsibility of the new paper. He promised that a business partner would advance all of the money, thereby leaving him and Ritchie to pay nothing; that he would get the printing of Congress, which would make a fine fortune in a very short time, and that it would be without risk to Donelson.[61] When Donelson refused, Polk almost decided to recognize the *Globe.* He had expected in 1844 only to be Vice-President, and through letters to friends of Van Buren he was obligated to them; by keeping Blair he could hold better their friendship. Friends of Calhoun were alarmed for fear Blair might be retained. Keep him and in three years he would nominate the next President, said Duff Green. At this juncture Lewis S. Coryell of Tennessee succeeded in bringing his influence to bear on Polk. Coryell had been scheming with Heiss and Cameron to raise money for a new press. Coryell

[59] Sioussat, *op. cit.,* III, 150-51, Jackson to Lewis, Feb. 4, 1845.
[60] Jackson MSS., Blair to Jackson, Mar. 24; Polk to Jackson, Mar. 26, 1845.
[61] Sioussat, *op. cit.,* III, 62-64, Polk to A. J. Donelson, Mar. 28, 1845.

offered to furnish the means with which to buy the *Madisonian* and the *Constitution,* with a purpose of consolidating them into an administration organ. Finally, at the earnest request of the friends of Calhoun, Polk agreed to dismiss Blair.[62]

Means with which to buy the *Globe* at a forced sale were provided by friends of the President. The Secretary of the Treasury transferred fifty thousand dollars of government money from a safe bank in Philadelphia to a bank in Middleton, Pennsylvania, of which Cameron was president. Thirty-five thousand dollars of this money was then loaned to the managers of the new official organ to be paid to Blair.[63]

At the request of Polk, Ritchie, who hesitated to become the editor of the *Globe,* was brought to Washington. Ritchie knew that the Democrats of Western Virginia loved Blair, that Jackson, Benton, and Van Buren opposed the change, and that he had no money with which to move to Washington, and that he was thirty thousand dollars in debt. The difficulties which would beset him in changing from a state political editor to a national one were serious indeed. Cameron, nevertheless, manipulated the federal funds, undoubtedly with Polk's knowledge, to furnish the money, and Walker played the political chessboard. To save the party from disruption Blair agreed to sell after he saw that Polk would not countenance the *Globe.* As Donelson refused to join in the new enterprise, Heiss became the managing editor. Ritchie was told that his services were essential for the security of the party unity and possibly to save the Union. He agreed to undertake the task of editing the *Union,* the new official organ.[64]

Blair agreed to sell provided his dearest friends advised him to do so. He saw hard times ahead for the official paper; a break with the administration was probable. He sent Rives to New York to see Van Buren and Wright, and wrote to Jackson for consent, promising him that if he surrendered his press, he would never surrender his pen, which should ever be devoted to Jackson's fame.[65] The frank advice of Jackson failed to overcome the

[62] C. S. Boucher and R. P. Brooks, Editors, "Correspondence Addressed to John C. Calhoun," in Annual *Report* of the Am. Hist. Asso., 1929. 288, 291, 295.

[63] Benton, *op. cit.,* II, 651; Sioussat, *op. cit.,* II, 208-15, 221.

[64] Ambler, *op. cit.,* 151-52.

[65] Jackson MSS. Blair to Jackson, Mar. 30, 1845.

bad advice of others and bring Polk to his senses. Jackson finally told Blair to sell with good security and trust not the bankrupt Cameron and the heavily involved Walker for payment. What would Van Buren say? He dispatched a letter to Van Buren to tell him that he was inclined to quit the *Globe*. Polk had decided to set up Ritchie whether or no. "He [Polk] stands on a heap of floating gourds loosely tied together," wrote Blair. "My opinion is that with Mr. Ritchie at the head of his Official [paper] the party will divide by Masons & Dixons line by the middle of the next session." Should he give way and thereby become a participator in the allowance of such a breach? He wanted to follow the patriotic course, and probably it would be best to allow the crisis to arise and then to come forth with the *Globe* to restore harmony.[66] Van Buren agreed that it was for the good of the party that Blair retire.[67]

An agreement for the transfer of the *Globe* to Ritchie and Heiss was made April 12. Presses, types, stands, binding establishment, office-building, and lot were sold at the appraised value of $35,000. With the kindliest expressed feelings for Ritchie, Blair quit the *Globe* a happy, wealthy man amidst the rejoicings of his family. The last issue appeared April 30. The *Globe* had fallen because Polk personally disliked Blair; secondly, because of the course which Blair pursued in regard to Texas; and thirdly, because Polk hoped to unite the cliques within the party and destroy the overweening influence of the Benton-Blair-Van Buren group.

[66] *Ibid.*, Jackson to Blair, Apr. 4, 7, 9, 1845; Benjamin Franklin Hall, *The Republican Party and Its Presidential Candidates* (New York, 1856), 335-38; Van Buren MSS., Blair to Van Buren, Mar. 29, 1845.

[67] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Apr. 16, 1845.

CHAPTER XVI

Silver Spring

Home the spot of earth supremely blest,
a dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.
—Montgomery.

Blair was penniless when he first reached Washington in 1830. He had ridden across the mountains to Philadelphia to fetch a sack of gold dollars to Frankfort, and had handled thousands of dollars printed by the state of Kentucky while he was a state banker, but little of it had passed into his own possession. When he severed his connections with the *Globe* fifteen years later, he did not know how much he was worth. He informed Van Buren that he believed he was worth one hundred thousand dollars in addition to the amounts which he had spent in setting up his sons in their occupations. The editor of the *Madisonian* voiced the sentiment of many people when he wrote to Mr. Harris of Nashville that Blair was immensely rich; that all of his wealth was known to have come from the public treasury. It is little wonder that the envious enemies of Blair and Rives cried for the principle of "rotation in office" to be applied to these printers.

President Polk was too much of a compromiser to attempt to force Blair into retirement without the offer of some kind of a compensatory office. He desired Blair's political support, although he confessed in his *Diary* that he knew Blair had never cared for him, and unjustly accused the ex-editor of having actually snubbed him on more than one occasion. Benton stuck Polk and his friends like a hedge-thorn every time they mentioned Texas in the Senate. He indignantly resented their overtures to Calhoun and the expulsion of Blair. Something had to be done for the editor to quiet Benton. The President offered Blair the mission to Madrid, while Kendall's plea for it went unheeded. Blair wrote to Van Buren, Silas Wright, and to the Hermitage for advice as

to his acceptance of the mission. He personally scorned it, but wished to tread on solid ground politically, and, too, his wife seemed to waver when thoughts of travel stirred her; she was justly concerned about Betty's health, which was threatened by an attack of tuberculosis. Van Buren was interested, but, as usual, he advised Blair to do what he most desired. Rives was up in arms. An excerpt from a letter which he wrote to Van Buren is an interesting side-light on the episode:

I desire to say to you that I am decidedly of the opinion that Mr. Blair should not, both on account of his own honor, & the honor & interest of his friends, take no office from Mr. Polk; or at any rate not take one for a year or two. I believe he concurs with me fully, & will not take one unless *persuaded* to do so by his wife. She has been the first all along to *take fire* at all the *suggestions* even of the Administration; but she listens to this proposition very complacently. Indeed, I think she will risk going abroad, while she would object to any & everything else proposed by Mr. Polk. If I were her I would much rather go abroad with the credit of having refused the mission, than with it double [illegible]. The money is no object to them. I would rather give Mr. Blair $18,000, than Mr. Blair should go abroad now, under pay of the Genl. Govt. You know Mrs. Blair's power . . . of persuasion . . . over her husband; & I am afraid he cannot withstand her. Elizabeth, who is as ambitious of being seen & heard as her mother, is expected home shortly; & if she pulls the same string, it will take all the power of you & Mr. Wright & myself to keep them from pulling Mr. Blair over. If you & Mr. Wright shall think with me, & will write to him that his acceptance of office at this time would subject him to *suspicion* it has, & it will justify him in refusing all the entreaties of his wife & daughter.

Before Rives dispatched his letter, he ran over to 6 President's Square to see Montgomery Blair about a letter which was to accompany his own. He added a line to his letter when he returned which changes our opinion of Mrs. Blair: "She now *talks* strongly against Mr. Blair receiving anything from Mr. Polk." Her good judgment coincided, finally, with that of her husband. They retired to the shades of beautiful Silver Spring. Even Montgomery refused a proffered foreign post, though he did accept the favor of naming many appointees in his adopted state of Missouri.[1]

[1] Van Buren MSS. Rives to M. Van Buren, April 12, 1845; *Calhoun Correspondence op. cit.* W. A. Harris to Calhoun, July 11, 1845.

The Blairs enjoyed a brief season in society before they turned countryward. They, the newly married Tylers, and Dolly Madison gave a round of "open houses" for the Democracy which was equal to any series of parties given of yore by the dignified Mrs. Calhoun, the brilliant Mrs. Gales, or the intellectual Mrs. Seaton. William Lyon Mackenzie, prince of exaggerators, but sometimes truthful, wrote of the Blairs at their Washington home, where they were in the "possession of immense wealth" and "resided in a splendid mansion—gave dinners and suppers to presidents, foreign ambassadors, cabinets and congressmen in a style of oriental magnificence." [2]

Soon the Blair home, which was conveniently located diagonally across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, was rented to the historian, George Bancroft, recently appointed Secretary of the Navy. The *Globe* had extolled the virtues of his incomparable history as it came volume by volume from the press. This illustrious, universally loved gentleman-democrat of medium height and slender figure was daily seen descending the high stone steps to his coach or mounting his horse to take his exercise, and then returning to bury himself amongst his books and manuscripts, or to engage in his public duties as Secretary of the Navy. He was so charmed with President's Square that he later purchased a spacious mansion on it where he reveled in the historic environment of the old homes of Washington. There were the homes of Stephen Decatur and John Rodgers, of Dan Sickles and John Slidell, and of Dolly Madison; and on the north side of it was famous old St. John's Church. In the center of the square was erected an equestrian statue of the Old Hero of New Orleans—one which Blair supervised as treasurer and adviser while it was being molded. There Blair could be seen walking or standing with bowed head before the statue, which, despite the severe criticism levelled against it, he often declared to be the best in existence.

Bancroft lived in the Blair mansion only during his term of Secretary of the Navy. John Y. Mason was the second prominent person to rent it. He, too, was Secretary of the Navy. During the last years of President Taylor's administration, Blair had the

[2] *The Lives and Opinions of Benjamin Franklin Butler and Jesse Hoyt* (Boston, 1845), 88.

Honorable Thomas Ewing, Secretary of the Interior, for a tenant. Secretary Ewing was the father of General Thomas Ewing of Civil War record, and of Ellen, wife of W. T. Sherman, whose marriage ceremony was performed in the imposing old home. Sherman was appointed a cadet at West Point by Ewing. The orator, Tom Corwin, who served as Secretary of the Treasury under Millard Fillmore, next lived in the Blair home. After this list of illustrious names had graced the Blair home, Montgomery Blair came east from St. Louis in 1853 to live in it, and to be near his father while he practiced law in the Supreme Court of the United States.[3]

Blair's customary exercise was horse-back riding. Mrs. Blair looked carefully to his health and accompanied him when he cantered cross country. As late as the seventies she prided herself on being able to alight quickly without assistance. Both of them rode gracefully. Betty was a true child of her parents in this respect, and it was while the father and daughter were riding across country along the old Seventh Street Road, which is now Georgia Avenue within the District of Columbia, in Montgomery County, Maryland, that an accident occurred which resulted in the emergence of Silver Spring as an estate. Blair was riding a very fine saddle-horse which he had recently bought of General William Gaither, a representative man of the county for whom Gaithersburg is named. The horse, Selim, showed his mettle, became frightened, unseated his rider, and ran westward into a valley studded with pines and rich undergrowth. Blair chased the horse in hot pursuit, but was unsuccessful in catching him until the dangling reins of the bridle caught fast to a bush. Near the horse he found a fountain of water ever rising, ever falling, ever sparkling in the sunshine. Hot and tired, he drew near to drink, but was entranced with the sparkling specks of silver which filled the white sand beneath the water. The sighing pines, the cool, gurgling brook, fed by the spring, the rolling ground broken in the distance by a ravine of a branch of Rock Creek, so charmed the great editor that he resolved at once to buy the spring which he called "Silver Spring." Betty was de-

[3] Benjamin Ogle Tayloe, *In Memoriam*, 150-151; Mary S. Lockwood, *Historic Homes in Washington* (Washington, 1899), 202-208; Conversations with Gist Blair and Blair Lee.

lighted. Her youthful imagination drew pictures of a grand country estate equal to those of the squires of old of Montgomery County. Blair was not averse to such a scheme, for he had not forgotten the Kentucky plantations of his kinsmen—the Bledsoes, the Browns, the Breckinridges, the Gists, and Henry Clay. He sought the owner, who priced the land at what the purchaser thought a very reasonable sum. More land was added from time to time, until hundreds of acres formed the Blair plantation, part of which was bought directly from the state of Maryland.[4]

It was around the column of bubbling water laden with flakes of glittering mica that Blair built his dreamed-of country estate. Here he became a political sage; to Silver Spring came the great statesmen and petty politicians seeking advice and information or recommendations. Polk and Buchanan, Benton and Van Buren, Seward and Sumner, Ritchie and Rives, Allen of Ohio and Andrew of Massachusetts, and many others drank the cool water, and followed the shady, winding path along the ravine below the spring while the pines and deciduous trees protected them from the warm sunshine. Meantime the homely face of Blair would lose its ugliness, and his kindly smile and lovable disposition would win the visitors' approbation. John A. Andrew, war governor of Massachusetts, said that he found more good sense and hospitality at Silver Spring than anywhere else in the country. If they became tired, they sat down in one of the many classically named grottoes, which dotted the long circuitous path which wound its way about the estate. And at last they might be seated in the "Acorn" situated near the spring.

The Acorn was a summer house built of solid timber, supported by gnarled oak, and shaped and colored to resemble an acorn. It was finished inside with dressed lumber and provided with seats and a hanging lamp. In this bower were served dainty food and rare wines, with which the cellar, a few yards away, was amply stored.

The scene was not easily described. It had to be seen. The spring was later protected by a stone wall on the east upon which was a capstone from nearby quarries lettered "Blair—1842," while a circular grassy lawn on the west added to the beauty of it. A

[4] Blair MSS.

white marble statue of a beautiful water nymph—a "*petite* Venus, rising from the bath"—stood over the rising water that bathed her feet. Spring stones were placed around the Acorn, and below it lay a small artificial lake which was ingeniously made to appear natural. Within the lake was an island of stones covered with native honeysuckle, which the master's hand had encouraged to grow. Garlands of plants and roses grew in circular tiers about the banks of the lake, causing the eye to be struck with the amphitheatre effect. The scene was startlingly beautiful. How restful it must have been to the injured Charles Sumner, who, suffering from the blow of Brooks, came to Silver Spring to live until he became stronger!

At the lower end of the lake was a bath supplied with water by a nearby spring. It was of concrete and shaded by overhanging trees and myrtle, while English ivy grew profusely within the enclosure. Farther westward, but within range of the Acorn, was the water mill, which slaves used for the family and for themselves. It was constructed and patented by a Mr. Page of Washington, who agreed to build it for one thousand dollars. Blair was so pleased with it that he paid Mr. Page two thousand dollars when it was completed. This *bijou* was made of stone. Water from the spring was forced up a perpendicular pipe, which discharged it into a small horizontal trough that emptied it into buckets of an over-shot wheel which was about twenty-two feet in diameter. The wheel was of very light materials, and only a small amount of water was required to make it revolve. It threshed, cleaned, and ground grain, bolted flour, cut hay, crushed cobs, washed clothes, and churned cream. After the Civil War it fell into disuse and, covered with a mass of English ivy, soon took on the appearance of an old ruin. It faced a courtyard and stood next to the barns, where were many cows, horses, and ponies. The servants' quarters were to the south and east. To the westward the eye of the visitor might see the house through the grove of trees, shrubbery, and flowers.

The residence was spacious but rather unpretentious. It was a mouse-colored, two-story home with its hall, reception room, kitchen, and other necessary rooms built about a large dining room. Nothing upstairs especially attracted the visitor. A long

porch in front of the house was lighted with a unique lantern. A head and large antlers of a deer rested on an odd coat rack in the hall. Rich, comfortable furniture filled the rooms. Books, pictures, and paintings added much to the interior. Among other paintings of value are those of Betty by the noted Sully, the only picture made of the charming Betty, who said afterward that no one desired to see the picture of an old woman or the old woman herself, and Sully's painting of Andrew Jackson. This painting is the one from which the likeness of Jackson was taken for five-dollar bills, and now hangs on the wall of Blair Lee's home at Silver Spring. A portrait of Jackson painted by his dearly beloved Earle also hangs there. Many a cheaper copy has been made to resemble it, and has been broadcast among admirers of Jackson. Mrs. Blair was not fond of Van Buren. She thought him too wily and adroit. One portrait of him resembles a fox because his whiskers are too red. This painting he presented to Mrs. Blair, saying, "Here, Mrs. Blair, is a picture *you* will like." The Blair descendants call it the red-fox picture. Cut glass, silver, and furniture which belonged to Blair may still be seen in the old home. A camp stool which General Grant gave to Blair still has its place in the collection of relics. A summer kitchen to the southwest was close enough to the dining room to enable the servants to run to the table with hot food. The summer kitchen was built to please Mrs. Blair, who would not allow the servants to build a fire in her home in the summer. The shutters which now shield the windows were not used until the outbreak of the Civil War, when rebel threats against Blair's life led him to keep his windows darkened to prevent the prying eyes of the enemy from discovering his whereabouts. A water system supplied by fresh water pumped from the spring made the house modern in that respect.

The Blairs were happy in their plantation home. People constantly came and went. Mrs. Montgomery Blair wrote to Mrs. A. H. Lowery, a sister-in-law, that there were "thirty present the other day," all dined and wined at great extravagance. Nineteen or twenty were present every evening for tea during the spring of 1865. When Mrs. Blair became too old to carefully supervise the meals, her daughter-in-law made cakes for her and helped to entertain visitors. Milk and cream, broiled dried venison,



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Reprint from Columbia Historical Society "Records," xxi

apple sauce, and Lawton blackberries were plentiful. The woods were full of fowls, and the garden and fields supplied vegetables. A few trees in an old orchard still stand. The grandchildren were given all the pleasure at the command of their grandparents. Each one got the dessert he liked best on the Fourth of July. The boys were like other boys, however, for they liked beefsteak smothered in onions, sauerkraut, and apple sauce. Twice a day did the servants and elders wash them and dress them with clean garments. A drove of ponies roamed the pasture near the barn for the pleasure of the youngsters. The grandparents lived for them.

A letter of Mrs. Levi Woodbury to her father [5] throws light upon the home at Silver Spring during the forties. After describing the residence as situated in a grove of tall evergreens, she writes: [6]

> But one female servant lives in the house with them. All the others live in neatly furnished little buildings by themselves—one broad gravel walk with rows of trees on each side leads from Mrs. B's house to these tenements, which in the distance look like a little village— Mrs. Blair says the negroes like to enjoy highly their independence— There is but a single window in each room in Mrs. B's house, which goes to the ground, and which *seems* to admit *sufficient light,* but to us New Englanders, who appreciate so highly the cheering rays of the sun, it seems a great mistake to have less than three or four— What Mr. Blair particularly prides himself upon, is, a mill, which carries on all the operations of his farm, with the assistance of but one man. . . .
>
> We have in the same house with us four representatives and their ladies— Three of whom are from the far west, and one of them from St. Louis— All of them have servants— The distinguishing feature of western husbands, is their attachment, liberality & indulgence to their wives— They dress much more expensively than northern ladies, and on Christmas and New Year receive splendid presents from their husbands. They are very independent, and I find if imposed upon are not afraid to quarrel with their dress-makers or jewellers.

The approach to Silver Spring was reached after seven miles of driving from Washington. Off the road through a winding driveway lined with tall pines, chestnuts, and oaks, the visitor could reach the old stone bridge after having crossed the line of the District of Columbia about five times. The gravel road turned

[5] Asa Clapp of Maine.

[6] Blair MSS. n. d.

in triangular fashion before the house as it twice crossed a miniature ravine. A stile was of assistance to those who wished to alight.

Blair was a lover of trees, shrubbery, and flowers. Native trees were cared for. Others were planted where they might add to the beauty of his grounds. More than once did he bring on a slight hemorrhage from his lungs by overwork at planting trees or other forms of landscape gardening. He loved poplars, chestnuts, and pines. These he encouraged to grow wherever possible. Melrose ivy from Van Buren's home still clings to the north wall of the Silver Spring home. North of the house and near the north drive was a large grape arbor planted there to keep the miasma from coming up from the creek. Blair Lee has not had faith in the prevention of miasma with an arbor, and it is, consequently, no longer there, for it hindered a beautiful view of the lowlands below the spring and of the heights of Washington miles away. Blair had his flower garden north of the arbor, where it has been kept to this day, although on a less elaborate scale. The garden was plotted in a way that made it very beautiful. Its shrubbery and variety of flowers made it one of the choicest sights at Silver Spring. Blair enjoyed rising early in the summer mornings to go, with bathrobe thrown about him, to gather flowers. He placed them in a spiral convoluted vase which made the bouquet resemble one large flower. This he presented to Mrs. Blair when she came down to breakfast. He had his greenhouse for grapes and flowers in winter. Near it was a violet pit for Mrs. Blair. Bearing fig trees shielded from the winter blasts were expressive of his varied tastes. They were in the large peach orchard which was between the house and the Seventh Street Road. There Blair gathered the peaches which he brandied for his friend, Van Buren, at Kinderhook.

The most attractive way at Silver Spring for those who loved to walk in the forest was down the branch from the Acorn until it became a ravine on its way to the Potomac. Along that path was Maria's Bridge where it entered the primeval forest. "The path thence wound through the woods along a stream of water which took its origin from the springs" above. The "first grottoes one met on the walk, which was called by my grandfather the

'Grotto Walk,' or by some others 'Lovers' Walk,' " says his grandson, "was the 'Bishop's Chair'; thence by a rustic bridge, the roadway of which was one huge, uneven stone, you came to the principal feature of the walk, a succession of grottoes, a spring and another bath. The largest of these grottoes was sunk deep into a hillside, above which grew lofty trees and underbrush, and it always had an air of mystery about it which suggested secrecy and seclusion. This Grotto Walk wound around, turning with the windings of this stream and at various places had seats and bowers. 'St. Andrew's Well' and 'Violet Spring' are two of the others which I recall. The walk was about a mile in length. One place was named 'Hern's Oak,' a majestic tree which recalled Falstaff; and the streams, and planting, gave the walk everywhere variety and beauty." It was along this walk that Blair led Ritchie when the latter tried to persuade him to reënter the editorial work on the *Globe*. Allen of Ohio and Secretary Buchanan each attempted to persuade Blair and Polk to compromise on their differences in 1846 with the object of having Blair assume the leadership of the Democratic press. They were equally enamored with Silver Spring and convinced of the ability of Blair.

2

Blair very naturally watched the course of the *Union,* which succeeded the *Globe* when it came out the first time, May 1, 1845. Ritchie was exhausted from the strenuous political campaign in Virginia which had just closed. He began his heavy editorials in the *Union* before he was twenty-four hours in Washington. He labored under tremendous handicaps. Party factions were not satisfied with an administration which attempted to build itself on all factions. It was like a raft floating downstream after the stringers were loosened. One thing saved James K. Polk from a disastrous failure—the Mexican War. Ritchie was supposed to unite the Calhounites with the followers of Van Buren who were still smarting from their defeat at Baltimore. The fractious Benton was uncontrollable. Ritchie proved to be unacquainted with state politics throughout the Union. While placating one group, he aroused the ire of another; super-sensitive to Polk's guidance,

he lost the confidence of the party chiefs. His intentions were pure and noble, but he was too slow and old to succeed as an editor of an administration paper.

He held Blair in high esteem and respected Van Buren. He paid Blair a tribute in the first issue of the *Union* and began his attempts at the mollification of the New Yorkers. The friends of Calhoun objected at once to such a course. His motto, "Liberty, the Union, and Our Country," could stand as a symbol, but his avowed purpose of the *Union*—"to bind the Union together"—could not be attained by him. Parties were nearly ready to disintegrate. He touched the tariff as lightly as possible to please Calhoun, but failed.[7] He, furthermore, proposed to oppose a "latitudinous construction of the constitution—a National Bank in any of its forms—an extravagant and unconstitutional system of National Internal Improvements—an insidious Distribution of the Proceeds of the Public Lands—the Assumption of State Debts, and such a Bankrupt Law as disgraced the statute book in 1842." He was against abolitionism and for the Missouri Compromise; he proposed to sustain Polk in his efforts to secure Oregon and Texas and support him for four years as President. Not a single issue was raised upon which Blair had not declared himself in favor, excepting a part of one which was war upon Mexico if necessary to obtain clear title to Texas.

Ritchie had failed with his program to grasp the situation which confronted him. As his able biographer, Professor C. H. Ambler, has said, "he looked backward instead of forward. The contests of the future were not to be fought out, as he expected, along old lines or even upon old battlefields." He believed the question of the tariff was of secondary importance to slavery. His strict constructionism became provincialism. The North misconstrued his "Prospectus" on Oregon for the *Union,* and the South resented his assurance that Benton and Van Buren had joined Polk in the annexation of Texas.[8]

A majority of the Democratic presses favorably noticed the change from Blair to Ritchie. Many acquiesced in it as a *fait accompli.* Others lamented the loss. A small percentage of the

[7] *Union,* May 1, 1845; Polk MSS., Ritchie to Major Heiss, April 13, 1845.

[8] C. H. Ambler, *Thomas Ritchie, A Study in Virginia Politics* (Richmond, 1913), 258-62.

subscribers to the *Globe* refused to receive the *Union*. On the other hand, men like Shadrach Penn and Samuel Treat of the [St. Louis] *Missouri Reporter* rejoiced in their belief that the *Globe* had passed out of existence unwept, unhonored and unsung. The *Constitution* spoke of the fall of the *Globe* as a result of its editor's "adherence to *men* rather than *measures*"—a policy which had led it into grievous errors.[9] Penn, Treat, and the *Constitution* were political enemies who prayed for the destruction of Benton's power. They linked Benton and Blair as inseparables. Calhoun considered the dismissal of Blair as the most important political action between the dates of February 26 and April 25, 1845. He was not certain that the adoption of Ritchie would mean a change in policy, but he felt it was a "great point to get clear of Blair and his 'filthy sheet.'" "Ritchie," he wrote, "will be at least decent and decorous, but I apprehend too little elevated for a government paper, and too much devoted to the old clique and party attacks to produce any considerable change in the policy of Mr. Polk and his cabinet."[10]

When Blair retired from active life at the office of the *Globe,* he journeyed northward, ostensibly to shop in Philadelphia, but primarily to have Sully paint his portrait. Jackson was delighted with the news. "Sully will do you justice," he wrote on May 26, "& the Whiggs may gibe as they please, but you have such a strongly marked countenance & noble traits of character marked in your physiognomy that Sully will give to your country & friends a good likeness, boldly setting forth that high honorable bearing that separated you from the Globe, & pecuniary interests, rather [than] abandon your democratic principles or do an act [of] injustice to the great democratic cause, in which you had so long & faithfully labored, & *I add successfully*. In this you have set an example for all real patriots to follow—I certainly will have a copy & it shall have a place in my own room after I am gone, the most conspicuous part of my Hermitage."[11]

At Washington factional fires burned brightly. John Rives remained in charge of the firm of Blair and Rives. No money settlement was yet made. The *Congressional Globe* was contin-

[9] *Missouri Reporter,* May 14, 1845.
[10] *Calhoun Correspondence,* 652-53.
[11] Jackson MSS. Jackson to Blair.

ued and improved under the efficient management of Rives. But his enmity for Polk broke out in most unexpected places. He was elected president of the newly organized Democratic Association a few days after Blair retired. His inaugural speech ended in strong charges against Polk, who forthwith suppressed it. Polk next curtly dismissed William B. Lewis from office, against Jackson's wishes and without giving any reasons for it. Ritchie blunderingly offended both the Northern and Southern factions. Benton bluntly refused to coöperate on Texas. Van Buren and Levi Woodbury refused to accept the mission to England. The latter wrote Treat that he could not "see much hope left for the cause of sound principles."[12] Wright would not serve in the Cabinet, and to cap the climax, Marcy, a New York Hunker, was appointed Secretary of War. Van Buren felt humiliated and irritated. Polk's course appeared to the radicals of New York as being a shifty one full of political tricks. The chagrined Calhoun refused the mission to England after Polk had refused to retain him as Secretary of State. Wright's administration as governor of New York was disrupted by party quarrels.[13] As a result he gradually lost his respect for the President.

Blair quit the *Globe* in good faith. He believed himself a martyr for the cause of his party and assured himself that within two years he would be recalled to guide the Democratic press to save the party. He had creditably filled an almost impossible position during the last presidential campaign. Polk never understood that. But he wrote approvingly of Blair's course after he was out of the *Globe* office.[14] Jackson assured Blair that he would be again the editor of the *Globe* in about two years and would be recalled to defend the party which they loved so much. Had Senator Allen of Ohio, among others, had his way with the President, this prophecy would have been fulfilled in less than a year. Dissatisfaction with Ritchie, though elected printer to Congress, was so strong that a movement was instituted to restore Blair as co-partner with Ritchie, or failing that, to set up another press with Blair as editor. Cass and Polk killed the movement in its incipient stages, and the approaching war with Mexico

[12] Treat MSS., Levi Woodbury to S. Treat, Apr. 1, 1845.
[13] Wright was elected in 1844.
[14] Jackson MSS. Polk to Jackson, April 27, 1845.

gave Ritchie an opportunity to save himself behind a wave of patriotism.

Meantime the Blairs were suffering a great personal loss. It had been generally known that General Jackson's life hung by a thread. A. J. Donelson had fully realized this when he attempted to restore friendship between Calhoun and Jackson late in 1844.[15] When he was disturbed over the *Globe,* he lay flat on his back or propped up with pillows while he wrote in defense of Blair. Panting for breath, he closed his solicitous letter to Blair, April 28, 1845, with, "May God bless you and your family & crown them with plenty, prosperity, & happiness through life, is the prayers of myself & all the inmates of the Hermitage." "I am swollen," he said, "from the sole of my feet to the crown of the head, & my thighs [are] larger than my body in its natural state." In less than two weeks after Jackson had encouraged Blair to have Sully paint his portrait, he was dead. Like the democrat that he was, he refused before he died to accept Commodore Elliot's present of a sarcophagus for the burial of his body. Such things were for kings and emperors, he said, not for democrats. He wanted his body laid away in his garden beside his revered Rachel, who had died in 1828. His friends at Silver Spring were remembered with words of kindness before he died.

An undated manuscript in the Blair papers signed by F. P. Blair tells something of the feelings of the Blairs. To Blair, Jackson had "filled the measure of his country's glory." It was not within the "scope of a mind" to "do justice to such a man." His life was a "volume of the nation's history." Mrs. Blair had loved him, and Betty, his "Little Democrat," had almost filial affection for him. She had written his letters for him one year in the White House and never did he smoke in her presence nor exclaim "By the Eternal," so much did he respect the young girl.

Eight hundred acres of the original 2,100 acres of the plantation had been given to A. J. Donelson, who erected thereon an imposing residence. The remaining part of the plantation about the Hermitage and nearly two hundred negroes were willed to Andrew Jackson, junior, an adopted son. He received also a large plantation in Mississippi. There was a heavy indebtedness

[15] *Calhoun Correspondence,* 1013, 1023-1024.

secured by mortgages on the Hermitage and the cotton lands in Mississippi. Of that, $18,000, with much accrued interest at six per cent, was held by Blair and Rives. Their first loan to Jackson was $10,000, secured by a first mortgage by will against the Hermitage. The remaining $8,000 was secured by the southern lands and negroes.

The extravagance of Andrew Jackson, junior, was enough to run him deeply into debt. But his wild investments in lead and silver mines, his gullibility, which made him a tool for sharks and gamesters, soon ran him into a $64,000 debt. His indebtedness finally amounted to $100,000. His creditors (not Blair and Rives) threatened to foreclose in 1855. Blair and Rives had been unable to collect an appreciable amount of the interest for so long that they had about $30,000 against the Hermitage, the negroes, and the lands in Mississippi. Wm. B. Lewis and Cave Johnson tried to aid Jackson, junior, but he was so hopelessly irresponsible that they finally made a plea to Blair and Rives to foreclose and take the property, pay off the outstanding legitimate debts, and set aside the remainder for Mrs. Jackson, junior. Unfortunately, Rives had recently lost several thousand dollars in a paper mill. The *Congressional Globe* did not pay heavy dividends, and he had spent money freely for his party in 1848 and 1852. Blair had spent money too freely after he left the *Globe*. Still, they wished to aid Mrs. Jackson, junior, and save the Hermitage to posterity.

Blair knew that he owed his success to Jackson. "I am willing to make any disposition," he wrote Lewis, of "General Jackson's will" to prevent the Hermitage from "falling into the hands of those who have preyed upon the unsuspecting or over-sanguine confidence of his adopted son." [16] He proposed to persuade the heir to sell the Hermitage to Tennessee, the legislature of which was to be persuaded to establish a state university or, more preferably, a "South Western Military School" for the South "as a rival for that of West Point."

But little could be done with Jackson, junior, who jealously clung to his equity in his inheritance. His indebtedness continued to increase. Worms ate his cotton. An overseer permitted seventeen valuable negroes worth $8,000 to die in Mississippi. The river

[16] Blair-Rives MSS. March 20, 1855.

flooded his plantation, and he bought more worthless stock. He became desperate for money, drove off twenty of his fine slaves in the dead of night and sold them down South. The family could not learn for what the money was spent. The slaves were mortgaged, as were others which he sold from time to time without the consent of those who lent him money.

Action was finally taken by men who wanted their money, or the land, and had little sentiment for the Hermitage. Jackson, junior, made a strong appeal to Blair and Rives, who accommodated him all they could without cancelling their loans. The Chancery Court released him from $25,000 of swindling debts in lead mines. The Mississippi lands and the greater number of the negroes were sold. Part of the Hermitage estate was sold at fifty dollars an acre. The state legislature gave $48,000 in bonds for the Hermitage grounds. It was generally understood that the state would ask that a military academy be built there, but the national government did not become sufficiently interested to do that. Would the North have countenanced the project at so late a day in the century?

Blair and Rives were paid $18,000 in state bonds which they sold at 92½. They offered to settle with Jackson, junior, for the remaining $15,000 debt at ten per cent of the amount, but he preferred to owe them rather than to borrow from others to pay them. The sum was never paid. They were given satisfaction in the establishment of the Hermitage as a shrine in memory of their greatest benefactor.

3

A nucleus of an organization for the purpose of organizing the members of the Democracy was formed by an old patriotic painter in his shop on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1840. The idea was developed in the form of the Democratic Association, which John C. Rives headed as president in 1845-46. Its primary object was better to organize the Democracy and propagate Jacksonianism as interpreted by its founder. Blair was as interested in it as Rives, but he played a less prominent part in it owing to the fact that he lived in Maryland.

The Association was interested in founding memorials to

Jackson. One of its projects was the erection of a bronze statue to the Old Hero in the center of Lafayette Square. Rives and Blair were very active in the promotion of it—Blair acting as treasurer and adviser to the sculptor. He wrote to his friends over the country urging them to contribute to the monument fund. Money flowed plentifully for a while, but soon the flow decreased, and had it not been for John W. Maury, banker, mayor, and philanthropist of Washington, who advanced funds to help the sculptor, the work might have been greatly delayed.

The sculptor was a young man by the name of Clark Mills of Charleston, South Carolina. His experience was limited to that of a bust of Calhoun which was promising enough to cause his townsmen to become sufficiently interested to send him to Europe to study. The Jackson Democratic Association invited him to mold the Jackson statue. He never got farther from home than Washington, for he was persuaded to do the work before he went abroad. The bronze was taken from cannon captured by General Jackson at Pensacola.

Admirers of the Old Hero had the extreme satisfaction of seeing the statue unveiled just thirty years after the Battle of New Orleans. The rising Senator Douglas supplied the oratory, which he made pleasing to the hearers who crowded around the veiled statue. Many admirers were justly disappointed in the work, which is considerably lacking in artistic merit. It was too small for the center of Lafayette Square, which is filled with trees. Miss Helen Nicolay has well described it thus:[17]

> Those who had known the general, admitted that the likeness was true and spirited; but they objected to the horse, which paws the air, the position being maintained not by the clumsy device of having him sit on his tail, as in the case of King George's horse, but by the amount of metal in his flowing tail being nicely calculated to balance that in the rest of the statue. It is literally a rocking horse, though bolted to the pedestal for safety's sake.

The statue does not dishonor the greater number of statues in the Capital. It is about as good as the equestrian statues usually found anywhere in the country. Blair always maintained that it was an exact likeness and made it his shrine. He had found the

[17] Nicolay, *Our Capital on the Potomac*, 487.

most conspicuous place on Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House for it, and there it is today. Presidents still place wreaths at its feet on January 8, the anniversary of the General's greatest military victory, the Battle of New Orleans.

The *Globe* was in itself a creation of Jackson. Its proprietors continued it for a quarter of a century after its political death as an official reporter of Congress. As early as 1840 they had a hickory pole erected in front of the office. The first one, which was erected at a cost of $400, came from Virginia. The expenses were defrayed by the mechanics who admired Jackson and the proprietors of the *Globe*. By 1845 Rives had spent large sums of money for the success of his party. He had also joined with Blair in wholesade betting on the elections. Success going to the Democracy brought several thousand dollars to the proprietors. In 1845 they used a part of their gains in the erection of Jackson Hall in memory of their friend of the Hermitage. Jackson heard of it on his death-bed. He characteristically exclaimed through gasps for breath: "How good and kind are my friends Blair & Rives to so honor me, my son I never can forget their kindness."[18]

Jackson willed his papers and letters to Blair, and asked him to use them in defense of his name against his calumniators. As early as July 21, 1845, Blair inquired as to the whereabouts of the papers. Kendall was writing a "Life of Jackson" which was never completed. He had a large portion of the documents and papers in his possession when Jackson died. Blair did not wish to hinder Kendall's progress, but he wanted the historian, Bancroft, whose "historical genius & celebrity" he valued, to write the life of Jackson.

The expressed will of Jackson pertaining to the manuscripts was never fully executed. A very large box of them fell into the hands of A. J. Donelson, who held them until Blair's two sons, James and Montgomery, went to Tennessee to receive them. Blair was much concerned about the manuscripts. He valued the bequest more than he would "John Jacob Astor's fortune." Bancroft did not write the life of Jackson, nor did Blair, who planned to do it until the last year of his life. Every year he promised himself and his friends that he would begin the great work

[18] Jackson MSS. A. Jackson, Jr. to F. P. Blair, June 10, 1845.

next year, but for one reason or another the stupendous task was never accomplished. Montgomery fell heir to the papers and he, too, purposed to write a work on Jackson. In this he was actually engaged when he died. The manuscript which he had already completed has been lost. Blair used many letters of the Jackson collection which fell into his hands for newspaper articles while he was defending Jackson, or was active in politics. The letters which were in Kendall's hands disappeared until the sons of Montgomery happened to find them on the second floor of Jackson Hall after the deaths of their grandfather and father. They [Woodbury, Gist, and Montgomery] magnanimously gave all the valuable Jackson papers to the Library of Congress, where they may be found as the Montgomery Blair Collection.

Blair dedicated his life to the defense of Jackson's name and principles. No legatee could have been more earnest and sincere in his beliefs and actions in that defense. "It will be the greatest pleasure of my life," he said, "to contribute in every way in my power to consummate the aims of a man who was to me more than a father." Here is the answer to the so-called enigmatic Blair. He was progressive—a radical—but he interpreted new movements in the light of Jacksonian memories and documents. He measured Polk, Pierce, and Buchanan by that light and found them wanting.

CHAPTER XVII

Westward Ho!

They knew that their blood and breeding, though making it probable that they would with proper effort succeed, yet entitled them to no success which they could not fairly earn in open contest with their rivals.—Theodore Roosevelt.

I

When the Blairs retired to Silver Spring, the Southern aristocracy was in its heyday. The newly rich family, surrounded by its slaves and tied by blood to the South, lived the full life of plantation owners while its head associated and corresponded with the Northern Democracy, the sentiment of which was fast rising against the extension of slavery. Blair's position was unique, but his conscience was torn by conflicting emotions. Should he lean toward the Slavocracy and all it stood for, or should he stand with Benton and Van Buren, Wright and Wilmot? His love for his country was to determine his course. Stephen Decatur said: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong." The sentiment was, in effect, that of the Blairs. "The Constitution, it must be preserved," was their belief. What the Constitution was, and what it should be, were questions which had been answered by Jefferson and Jackson. While the father of the Blair family thumbed the Jackson letters to refresh his memory with Jacksonian philosophy, his country took its greatest leap in the attainment of its present boundaries.

The time was one of great change. Large caravans plodded along the long trails to the West. Thousands of farmers trekked to Oregon, and thousands sought the gold regions of California, where gathered adventurers from all over the world. The Isthmus of Panama assumed significance in the eyes of Americans.

The Cuban adventurer and rebel, Lopez, stirred both North and South in different ways over the spread of slavery. Political lines were being re-drawn. The old parties were on the eve of disruption. The day for administration papers was fast dying. Honest Thomas Ritchie, variously nicknamed "Old *Nous Verrons,*" "Old State Rights," and "Father Ritchie," was failing as a great editor, not because he was a poor editor, but because he was neither a genius nor a pander.

The spirit of reform was approaching fructification. America was not alone in her rapid change in life. The Parliamentary Reform Bill of 1832 was one of a series of reforms of the thirties and forties in England. The corn laws were repealed, and the Chartists were at their strongest in the fifth decade of the nineteenth century. Continental Europe was subject to political reverberations, which were not, however, so significant as those of the French Revolution. Cyrus McCormick, a descendant of a Scottish-Irish family of the Shenandoah Valley, was revolutionizing the process of harvesting grain. Already by 1847 his factory in Chicago was selling about two hundred reapers a year to the farmers whose fields were large enough to enable them to use these new machines. Railroad systems were spreading over the Atlantic coastal plains, and were making their way westward to Chicago. Meantime competition between strategically located cities in the Middle West was keen for transcontinental routes. Cities competed with religious zeal for political conventions. Benton and Allen of St. Louis argued the advantages of a trade route to the Orient to pass through St. Louis, across Missouri, thence westward through the Great Pass—a route nationally advertised by John C. Frémont. The Blairs were enthusiastic over the prospects for the Middle West, and especially for St. Louis, and showed their enthusiasm by investing money. At one time Frank invested as much as eighteen thousand dollars for his brother James in real estate in St. Louis. Montgomery bought lots in Benton Place and other spots in the city, and so made the money with which to build his beautiful home named "Falkland" at Silver Spring. Frequent trips to Silver Spring and to Washington constantly reminded the Blairs that a railroad was needed to increase the value of their property by linking St. Louis with the

East. Nor is it amiss to mention that the Blairs were ever ready to promote new inventions and processes. They were adventurers in both science and politics. The mill at Silver Spring is proof of the father's interest in convenience in the home. Frank was enthusiastic about the new Turkish bath, the Monitor, the reaper, or a new locomotive; Montgomery wanted all the inventions that made the home a better place in which to live.

While Blair was building baths at Silver Spring, Adam Thompson of Cincinnati entertained a Christmas party with his new shower-bath. The mechanism for showers had been introduced in the White House in Jackson's day, but the new improvement excited the guests at Cincinnati so much that a "war of words raged in the newspapers about the moral aspect and the healthfulness of the practice." Blair built outdoor stone baths below the spring so that water from the pool could be piped by gravity into them. There was one for himself and one for Mrs. Blair. Kitchen ranges were brought into general use during the war between the bathers and anti-bathers. At the same time, the young aspiring musicians were entertaining their friends with the latest success—Stephen Foster's *Old Folks at Home.* Amidst the excitement over the passage of the Omnibus Bill, Jenny Lind sang her way into the hearts of Americans. It was she who so stirred Daniel Webster by singing *Hail Columbia,* that he rose to join in the chorus, and bowed nine times to the singer while his wife frantically pulled at his coat-tails.

William Lloyd Garrison had given a new turn to his argument for abolition in 1842. He concluded that Church and State were bound hand and foot by the slave aristocracy, and could be freed only by disunion. "They must dissolve all connection with those murderers of fathers, and murderers of liberty, and traffickers of human flesh, and blasphemers against the Almighty at the South." It was not treason, he said, to cry, "Down with every slave-holding Union!" His new doctrine shook his party to its very foundations; many of his followers withdrew to enter the Liberty party or the Free-Soil party, but leaders like Wendell Phillips and Stephen S. Foster accepted his policy. Garrison had no faith in the efficacy of a third party. He therefore refused to amalgamate with the Liberty party, which planted itself upon the

anti-slavery character of the Constitution in the belief that it "does not sanction nor nationalize slavery but condemns and localizes it." However, when the Free-Soilers appeared, Garrison saw they were on the side of the slave, not against him. He hailed them as a "cheering sign of the times, and an unmistakable proof of the progress we have made, under God, in changing public sentiment."

In 1848 abolitionists and Free-Soilers worked coöperatively in many sections of the country. Could the Blairs, who contemned the abolitionists in the thirties, vote with them in 1848? The Blairs were strictly constitutionalists; the abolitionists were wholly blinded by one issue to the extent of desiring to see the Union destroyed! The venerable Adams, who had fought the good fight for the right of petition, attracted the eyes of the people to himself and to the issue when he returned to Washington after a long illness at his home in Quincy. While Mr. Hunt was supporting the Wilmot Proviso on the floor of the House, Adams appeared in the doorway. The speaker stopped, and all eyes were turned upon the sick man. A New Yorker and a South Carolinian led him to his seat, where members of the House crowded to congratulate him upon his recovery from paralysis and upon his return. Later he was stricken again while in his seat in the House. He died at his post of duty in the national legislature in February, 1846. Blair, the editor, had denunciated Adams, the abolitionist, unmercifully because he feared for the Democratic party and for the Union. Now Blair, the private citizen, could mourn the loss of an Adams and join in the fight against the Southern Democracy which demanded the right to extend slavery. While the Blairs were fighting abolition in the thirties, they became convinced of the morality of the struggle against slavery and before 1844 they were on their road to free-soilism.

Blair thought that he resigned his editorship to Polk for the sake of his party. He made this clear to Jackson, April 17, 1845, when he wrote:[1]

> I saw that I could not remain connected with the press without coming into collision with the official organ & making a breach between those who supported the Editor & the Executive— Under this

[1] Jackson MSS.

state of the case, I felt it my duty to give way & not have the sin of dividing the party laid at my door. I shall do all that I can to prevent any ill consequences from this measure of Mr. Polk—but I am somewhat apprehensive that Mr. Ritchie will have difficulty in pleasing all the cliques and the honest democracy to boot. I pleaded very hard with the President to allow me to serve him as I had served you & Van Buren but he would not yield to any reasoning. I declare to you, that, if I know my heart, my motive in this, was the public good—no mercenary interest of my own— Both Mr. Rives & myself foresaw a loss of part of our capital in a few years was for the Administration— We did not doubt that the Calhoun men & a few others of the disaffected could defeat us for the Congressional printing & the Administration has now none to give, as it is let out to the lowest bidder— Yet as we had made our means by the support of the Democracy, we were willing to devote them to the cause— And I urged Mr. Polk to permit us to hold our old position to make our efforts effectual. . . . And if all goes well for the party and the enemy of popular rights gains nothing by the new policy which the President is about to enter upon, I shall never regret the course he has adopted in reference to myself. . . . All I can do is to wish him well & aid him in a private station.

President Polk assured Jackson before he died that Blair was friendly and "acting well." He contended that Blair spoke favorably of his administration as late as 1846. There can be little doubt that the actual break between the Blairs and the administration came as a result of the Wilmot Proviso, which was introduced in the House by David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, August 8, 1846.

The President had told the House in his message that he desired the termination of the war with Mexico as quickly as possible, and he asked for an appropriation of $2,000,000 to settle the boundary disputes. The opposition distrusted the President. For one thing, they were opposed to the extension of slavery. Wilmot, a free-soil Democrat, offered his famous resolution as an amendment to the two million dollar bill, stating that slavery should never exist in territory acquired from Mexico.

This amendment precipitated one of the most exciting debates in the history of Congress. It aroused the country as few measures have done. Nationally known liberals and men whose names were to become familiar to every one favored the Proviso in part

or in whole. Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, who vacillated between parties according to his own views, was enthusiastic about it. Solid Silas Wright, the irascible Benton, and young Preston King all favored it. Abraham Lincoln declared that he voted for it in one form or another more than forty times. The representatives could carry it in the House, but the South dominated the Senate, where the Proviso failed to pass. It was only one of the results of the Mexican War, which the President successfully terminated with an enthusiastic army of recruits and the able generalship of Scott, Taylor, and others such as Wool and Kearney. The Mexican cession of California and New Mexico aided the country in carrying out our theory of Manifest Destiny.

2

Frank Blair played a small part in the war. He had attended Princeton, but had not graduated. He, with a number of other students, was involved in a verbal dispute with some of the authorities of the University as a result of a wild party. Frank voluntarily left for Transylvania University, where he studied law and graduated in 1843. While in Kentucky, he fell in love with an attractive young woman who possessed a very beautiful voice. She returned his affection. She was loved, too, by Frank's brother James. Frank chivalrously refused to take her from James, who, in turn, desired to sacrifice his own love for Frank. Each of the brothers refused to speak to the other of his love for the girl. Both determined to go elsewhere. James had joined the navy and he could go away as a sailor. Later Frank began to court Appoline Alexander, whose parents favored the courtship. She was a grand-daughter of Governor Madison of Kentucky, and a cousin of the Blairs.

Frank left Kentucky to enter Benton's law office before he married Appoline whom he called "Apo." In St. Louis he applied himself too closely to his books, and consequently undermined his health. Horace Greeley had not yet said, "Go West young man and take up a farm"; but men did go to seek fortune, health, and security from justice, and Frank was advised to go west to seek his health among the rough-and-tumble elements. He turned toward Westport, where he began his long journey over the Sante Fé

Trail which was now well beaten, and surprisingly changed since the days of Pedro Vial, or even of Becknell. The dusty and care-worn traveler left the main trail at Cimarron Crossing to follow the right fork to Bent's Fort west of the headwaters of the Upper Arkansas, where he was entertained by his cousin, George Bent. Bent's Fort was located in the ranges of the Arapahoes and Cheyennes—among the tribes which Black Kettle was soon to lead to war against the whites. Traders inured to the hardships of the plains had trafficked for years at the different Bent posts. Indians, Mexicans, half-breeds, and outlaws formed a large part of the population. A few soldiers were on duty. Men were a little nervous over the unsatisfactory relations then existing between the United States and Mexico.

George Bent had married a Mexican girl when he was on one of his trading trips in Mexico, and had a daughter and a son, Robert, who was sent to St. Louis to school. Bent and Frank Blair became fast friends, and before Bent died of consumption he had Frank appointed guardian of his children.

The fort was full of idle men. They spent their time in hunting, in playing cards, pool, and checkers, and in dancing. Mocassined trappers, traders, tenderfoot Easterners, and soldiers "swung merry-faced, laughing Indian women in the rough and hearty dances of the frontier." On Christmas and the Fourth of July, grand balls in which every one took part were held at Bent's Fort. The Mexican and Indian women danced in turn with employers, Indians, Mexicans, and travelers. The hilarity of the occasion grew throughout the night. There was usually a Frenchman present to play interchangeably a violin and a guitar. At one of these balls Frank played the banjo all night.[2]

Frank was at Bent's Fort when the Mexican War broke out. General Kearney appointed him the first Attorney-General of the Territory about the Fort and part of New Mexico. Now his legal knowledge stood him in good stead, as with the aid of General A. W. Doniphan, Willard P. Hall, and Dr. David Waldo, he drew up Kearney's Code for the region. He had the unique experience of drawing up the "only indictments for treason against the United States upon which convictions were had and

[2] *Collections* of the Kansas State Historical Society, XV, 51, 56.

sentences of death were pronounced." The indictments were the result of the action of some Spanish leaders who attempted to excite the natives to revolt. A number of Americans were assassinated at Taos before the revolt was quelled.

A misunderstanding between General Sterling Price and Frank led to the abolition of the office of Attorney-General in 1847. Frank returned to St. Louis, a healthy young man with considerable experience which had been crowded into two years. He did not stay in St. Louis long before he hurried to Woodford County, Kentucky, to marry Appoline Alexander on September 8, 1847.

Appoline Alexander Blair was not beautiful, but she was a charming woman of high intelligence. She was energetic, unafraid, and determined; she could command a household or run a newspaper. Though she wished her husband to become President of the United States, she cheerfully accepted a lower station in life. Whether Frank was wealthy or poor, she remained always his very affectionate "Apo." She was a kind mother, firm with her children, and thoughtful of her slaves. After her husband had risen in his practice of law and in politics, her home was a large two-story residence. She became the mother of eight children, the eldest was born in 1848 and the youngest in 1872. Her culture and hospitality made her home a popular meeting place for her husband's political friends. Few families could have been happier than was theirs.

3

While Frank was at Bent's Fort, James married Mary Serena Eliza, daughter of General Sydney Jessup, on January 14, 1846. At the time of his marriage, James was a lieutenant in the navy drawing a salary of fifty dollars a month.[3] He owed his original appointment to President Jackson. He saw service during the Mexican War and had the good fortune to be with Wilkes on his South Sea Expedition. He was independent in nature, and his inclination to scientific study led him to gather data on marine life and seafaring for his own future use. When he married, his father gave him ten thousand dollars and two lots on President's Square. The gift was sufficient in itself to allow him to establish

[3] Conversation with Mrs. Violet Blair Janin, a daughter.

himself comfortably in business. He was too much of an old salt, however, to abandon the sea. He therefore left his young wife in Washington while he cruised the Pacific about Mexico and California. He sent the greater portion of his salary to his wife, whom he told to buy diamonds with it for personal adornment or to build a cottage on the farm which they were given near Silver Spring. She wisely built the cottage and improved the farm generally.

James resigned his commission in the Navy to enter the rush for gold in California. He was there in May, 1848, when a Mormon walked the streets of San Francisco shouting "Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River!" while he held aloft a bottle of gold dust. Laborers had found it at Sutter's Mill early in the winter while they were deepening a channel for a tail-race. "Launches, sloops, lighters, sail-boats, craft of every kind, crowded with men, were soon on their way up the Sacramento. Such as could not go by water went on foot, or on horse, mule or by wagon." San Francisco was soon almost deserted. "Stores were closed, places of business vacated, houses left tenantless, and storekeepers, lawyers, doctors, mechanics, and laborers rushed to the mines." Newspapers ceased, for the typesetters, pressmen, and printer's devils rushed to pan gold. Vessels coming into port were entirely deserted by their crews. Even the captain, leaving his wife in charge of his ship, followed his deserting men to the fields.

James, who had privately taken soundings of San Francisco Bay while he was still a lieutenant in the navy, wisely remained behind to act as harbor pilot. He charged one thousand dollars a boat. Some of the captains were glad to pay, others demurred at the high cost of his pilotage. As high as two thousand dollars a day flowed into James's pocket. When his business of piloting waned, he began to improve his opportunity on the Sacramento River upon which he had placed the first steamboat. He soon accumulated a fortune, part of which was invested by Frank in property in St. Louis.

James interrupted his undertakings to return for his family, which he took to California by way of Nicaragua, as the route overland was too strenuous and dangerous for Mrs. Blair and

the children. Although the fevers, poor food, and exposure of Central America taxed the strength and spirit of men and women to the limit, the Blairs landed in San Francisco without serious mishap, and saw California admitted into the Union as a free state. The news of the famous Congressional debates in which Clay, Webster, Crittenden, Douglas, and Davis participated came to their ears long after the Compromise of 1850 was enacted. The Compromise was a business man's peace, and the people of California were doing a rushing business. James bought lands along San Francisco Bay where is now the business district of the city. Through misunderstanding and negligence, the government has never enforced the decision of the courts which adjudged his heirs entitled to compensation for the property. If settled at the present value of the property, the sum would be staggering. Mrs. Blair returned to Washington City after the premature death of her husband on December 15, 1852. He had never fully recovered from having his hands and feet badly frozen, while he was serving in the navy. His body was later returned to Silver Spring, where it was buried in a mound built by slaves and his father's own hands. The fortune which James had amassed was administered by Montgomery, who won the everlasting gratitude of his sister-in-law and her children by his good judgment and honesty. The ably managed fortune grew to considerable proportions.

4

Montgomery served as Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in St. Louis during the exciting days of the Mexican War and the Forty-Niners.[4] He became an active leader in city politics. As the stipend which he received for his services was too small to induce him to continue in the office, he resigned to resume the practice of law. He was offered a judgeship in the state supreme court, but this he refused on grounds of inadequate salary. Before he left St. Louis for Washington in 1853, his legal practice had become lucrative and extensive.

His first wife had died, January 11, 1844. Three years after her death he married Mary (Minna) Elizabeth, daughter of Judge Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire. The Blairs and the

[4] 1845-1849.

Woodburys had been friends for many years, although they often disagreed in politics. They lived near each other in Washington when Woodbury was there.

By 1850 Montgomery was experienced in practical politics. His cogent reasoning in law fitted him for practice before the Supreme Court, before which court he argued his first case when he was thirty years old. This practice was, however, interrupted by his official duties in St. Louis. He was six feet in height, straight and spare, and carried himself erect. Cornelius Cole remembered him as a "tall, spare man, more so than his aged father . . . by no means so taciturn as his brother, Frank, Jr." [5] Noah Brooks said that he was the "best read man in Lincoln's Cabinet, and he was well versed in literature ancient and contemporaneous; but his manners were awkward and unattractive." [6] A correspondent of the New York *Evening Post* described him as having a "tall lithe figure, sharp eye and intelligent face." [7] He was proud of the fact that he carried himself like a cadet and could wear his West Point uniform without inconvenience, even to the end of his life. His expressive eyes were bluish-gray and kindly, although they blazed when his temper was aroused. He never wore a full beard, but was clean shaven and had close cropped hair. His appearance was therefore in marked contrast to that of his contemporaries during the Civil War. To his parents and near relatives he was kind and considerate, and much of his time was spent in ministering to them. He loved good books and works of art, and one of his best speeches was made on art. He firmly believed that American artists were unwise to go abroad to study and to find subjects. He wanted an American school of artists who would study America,[8] and spend their lives in their native land.

As a lawyer he saw the issues of his cases clearly. His argumentation was compact and wholly free from superfluities and without jokes and sallies. He was extremely earnest—religiously so. To him, arguing a case was as solemn an affair as reading from the Bible to a congregation on Sunday. He was deeply religious. He served for years as lay reader at St. Johns in Washing-

[5] *Memoirs* (New York, 1908), 170.
[6] *Washington in Lincoln's Time* (New York, 1895), 35.
[7] *Ibid.*, 35.
[8] Blair MSS.

ton, and at Silver Spring where he faithfully attended church. He would ride for miles into the country to read to a congregation if his services were needed. His greatest liability, in fact almost his undoing at times, as in the Dred Scott Case, was his thin, fine voice, which sometimes could, under the stress of emotion, rise to oratorical heights, but which usually was so low that newspaper reporters wrote more than once: "Blair's voice could hardly be heard." He labored against this defect, which seemed to be common to the Blairs, all his life.

Montgomery made a special study of land laws and regulations of churches, and became an authority on legal matters which concerned religious organizations. Reform movements always interested him, and his legal practice consequently included a number of cases concerned with reform and the church. His knowledge of the Spanish language enabled him to act successfully as counsel in a large number of land cases in the Southwest after the Mexican War. Among many such cases may be cited: "Survey of the Rancho Bolsa de los Escarpinas," "Rancho Santiago De Santa Ana," "Rincon Point" in San Francisco, "Meeks vs. Olpherts," "Streter vs. S. P. R. R. Co.," the "Las Animas Grant," and the notorious "Mariposa." His knowledge of law included that of corporations, especially railroads. Montgomery was in the prime of life when the great wave of railroad building passed over the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific after 1850. St. Louis was as much interested in her own development as a radiation center as any healthy metropolis could be. She long scorned swampy Chicago, only to be finally outdistanced by her. Montgomery, the lawyer, was one of the enthusiastic supporters of railroads. He was counsel in cases involving the Southern Pacific and the Baltimore and Ohio Railway companies. The president of the Baltimore and Ohio was his intimate friend. Once a year at the holiday season a barrel of fresh oysters was left in Montgomery's yard. Whence did they come? The Blair family were quite certain that the thoughtful president of the Baltimore and Ohio sent them, and the descendants of Montgomery still believe it.

This genial, courteous, and confiding Blair had found a suitable wife in "Minna" Woodbury. She was socially and culturally

his equal. Within a few months after her marriage to Montgomery she had captivated the hearts of the elder Blairs by her good sense and kindness. She was an excellent mother, and she bequeathed her kindly disposition to her children, who loved her devotedly. She was soon welcomed into the social circles of St. Louis, the members of which never forgot her.

Her father, Levi Woodbury, was of high rank in politics and statesmanship. He had descended from an "intrepid and strong-minded race of men who left their homes in England early in the seventeenth century, to enjoy their rights as freemen" in New England. His ancestors were among the original settlers of Salem, Massachusetts, and from there his father migrated to New Hampshire, where Levi was born in 1790, one year before the elder Blair was born at Abingdon, Virginia. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1809, and studied law in Litchfield and Boston. In June of 1819, he was married to Elizabeth, the very capable daughter of Asa Clapp of Portland, Maine. Her father was a veteran of the Revolution and one of the wealthiest and most distinguished merchants of Maine. His vessels had long plied the ocean between Portland and Europe, the East and West Indies, and South America. Elizabeth's grandfather was Jacob Quincy of New England stock and well known to students of the genealogy of New England families. Young Levi Woodbury's heritage was not unlike that of the Clapps. The Woodburys had been ship owners, some of whom were masters of their own vessels. They sailed between Jamaica and New England and Nova Scotia, trading in rum, the staple article of that leg of the triangular passage. Fair fortunes were thus created by those old families.

Levi's youthful ardor led him into politics at an early age when he soon distinguished himself as a lawyer and a sagacious politician. He was less a brilliant orator than a diligent student. Even temper, suavity of manner, and moral courage were combined in him. His friends elevated him to a judgeship in the Superior Court in his state, to the governorship, and to the Senate of the United States. He served seven years in the cabinets of Presidents Jackson and Van Buren as Secretary of the Navy and of the Treasury. President Polk felt very friendly toward him for his services in New Hampshire in 1844. He offered him a cabinet

position, a mission (both of which were declined), and then appointed him Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, January 3, 1846. At the time of the marriage of his daughter with Montgomery Blair, he was strongly talked of for President of the United States in 1848.[9]

As the years passed, Woodbury had built an estate of his own, one of which he could justly be proud. Many guests came to the fine old home. As many as six hundred and fifty people were invited to one party where Bennett of the New York *Herald* was the lion of the evening.[10]

Martha Quincy greatly influenced the course of life for Minna and Montgomery Blair. An excerpt from Minna's letter to her cousin, Martha, tells its own story:[11]

> In two short days dear Cousin Martha my fate for life will be decided & all will be over. How much I wish you could be here to laugh & keep up my courage for I'm beginning to tremble a little now all my dresses are finished, & I've nothing to do but to think of it. . . . The Judge [Montgomery] always wishes for you of all the family to be here, & I do too. As I know you would give me a great deal of good in both a religious & worldly view. . . . I am receiving every day beautiful presents— Today papa gave me a splendid silver pitcher which he sent to Boston for. I have *two* very handsome silver card cases, prayer book bound in velvet & gold bracelets, rings, books & all kinds of pretty little things very handsome gold watch & chain. . . . A set of pearls are his bridal gift. My dress is very handsome, over a white satin, stiff, 'twill stand alone. A veil to my feet, fastened on with a wreath & pearl ornaments. . . . You cannot tell what a providential thing I think your visit was to us last year. I fear I did not know my own mind well enough, with all the family so much against it at first. I might have made the false step of my life now the first short [one] is over, they all seem to love him so much, & he & them are so perfectly reconciled to everything that I feel I could not be too grateful not only to you but to the one above who rates & guides us in all our actions, as I feel has done in this.

A letter written by a member of the family at Portsmouth two weeks after the wedding describes it thus:[12]

> To us it [the wedding] was not what could be called "gay" though it went off much better than we had hoped— E. Emerson was the only

[9] Pamphlet, "Sketch of the Public Life of Levi Woodbury" in Blair MSS.
[10] Blair MSS. Mrs. Levi Woodbury to Martha Quincy, Jan. 25, 1839.
[11] Blair MSS. n. d.
[12] Blair MSS. No name, n. d.

relative present— Pa, Ma & the two youngest sisters with Edward & Russle Waldron went into the Church first— Chas [Woodbury, son of Levi] & myself then Minna & Blair— We were crying so much that although the church was very much filled I think not one of us were conscious of the circumstances— Dr. Burrough performed the ceremony with much solemnity and after the blessing presented Minna with the prayer book from which it had been read— In the evening she had quite a levee of the age—youth—uglyness & beauty of Portsmouth.

Their wedding tour was a trip to St. Louis by way of Silver Spring. Minna readily adjusted herself to her new surroundings while Montgomery entered actively into politics. Their children were five in number: (1) Minna, named for her mother and born at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, May 28, 1850; she married Dr. Richie. (2) Woodbury, born in St. Louis, September 1, 1852; he is still living in Washington, D. C., where he is a wealthy lawyer (1932). (3) Maria Gratz, born in Washington, D. C., May 12, 1854, and died at Philadelphia, September 11, 1862. (4) Gist, born in Washington, D. C., September 10, 1860; he is a retired lawyer in Washington, D. C., where he owns and lives in the historic Blair Mansion, 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue. (5) Montgomery, junior, born in Washington, D. C., March 14, 1865. He owns and lives in his father's old home, "Falkland," at Silver Spring.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Campaign for Freedom in 1848

Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft is ever won.
—Byron.

I

Why did the Blairs join the Free-Soil party in 1848? That question has been asked many times. Was it because Van Buren led the party with his name; or did the Blairs leave the old organization through a spirit of revenge; or did they find it impossible to follow the Southern leaders in the Democratic party?

In the first place, the dearest friends of the Blairs were involved in political disputes within the state of New York. Silas Wright accepted the Democratic nomination for governor of New York in 1844 because he was led to believe that it was to save the party ticket from defeat in the state and nation. He therefore reluctantly resigned his seat in the Senate to enter the gubernatorial race, which he won. Polk carried New York and was elected. Once Wright had sacrificed himself to the wishes of his party, he fully expected complete coöperation from the President. He failed to receive it, although President Polk felt he was supporting his benefactor.

Wright was placed in an embarrassing situation. He strongly opposed the annexation of Texas in the manner in which it was accomplished. The Baltimore convention of 1844 had wounded his feelings when it shelved Van Buren and chose Polk. The offer of the vice-presidency was not sufficient balm to heal his wound. He was not a popular governor of New York, for he could not stoop to cheap politics, which he knew to be necessary for his success at Albany. The factional quarrels were intensified by his administration. His friends refused to allow him to retire

at the end of his term. As he was a strict party man, he gave way to their wishes, and ran for a second term. On November 18, 1846, Van Buren wrote Blair that the Democrats were dreadfully beaten in New York.

Who was at fault? It must be admitted that Wright was unsuited for his station. He was out of harmony with the administration at Washington on what it considered to be its primary issue. Preston King opposed Polk on the question of annexation. The Hunkers lost no opportunity to injure Wright by opposing King. Free-Soil sentiment had pervaded the ranks of the New York Radicals to such an extent that it could not be ignored in the campaign. Wright held the Hunkers responsible for his defeat, and so did the majority of his friends. The radical C. C. Cambreleng wrote to Van Buren that "Polk, Marcy, Cass & Co" stood first in the causes for their defeat. Young Samuel Tilden, who was now actively entering the political arena, agreed that Wright's defeat was the result of Hunker dissent. Van Buren wrote to Blair that:[1]

> *Your friends* at Washington did doubtless at the eleventh hour & after we had been so signally defeated in Pennsylvania, Maine & New Hampshire, exert themselves to induce their particular adherents in this State to vote for Mr. Wright. But their influence came late, too late, & they have found how much easier it is to raise a third Party than to govern its course after it is raised.

In less than a year after his defeat, Silas Wright was dead. His friends said that "his pride had been wounded, and his heart broken by the treachery of those who owed him so much," and from that time they spoke constantly of the Hunkers as his assassins, and threatened to do justice to his murderers. Van Buren was visibly depressed. In 1874 R. H. Gillet, recognizing the deep ties of friendship which had existed between Blair and Wright, dedicated his *Life and Times of Silas Wright* as an "evidence of esteem" to Blair who had never forgotten Wright nor forgiven the Hunkers and Polk, whose opposition and negligence he believed to have caused Wright's death. Blair had considered Wright his friend next to Jackson, Van Buren, and Benton. He had always felt safe for the *Globe* when Wright was in the Senate.

[1] Blair MSS. Nov. 18, 1846.

Blair kept Van Buren informed of events at Washington. Sometimes it required a daily letter to carry all of the exciting news. He gloried in the noble fight of Benton against Polk and Calhoun. Benton advised the people of Oregon to stand firmly for the exclusion of slavery. On the other hand, he voted against the Wilmot Proviso in relation to the Mexican cession. Fears for the sake of the Union which he believed was endangered by a Southern sentiment of disunion caused him to support the administration forces in the defeat of the Proviso. He continued, however, to vent his wrath upon Polk and Southern heads.

The partisans of Calhoun were endeavoring to defeat Benton in Missouri.[2] Their collusive activities stirred him into a vindictive verbal attack on Calhoun that neither one ever forgot. Calhoun informed Benton that he thought the Missouri senator would be in the right place on slavery in Oregon, for Missouri was a slave state. Benton replied: "I shall be found in the right place. I am on the side of my country and the Union." Blair exultantly wrote to Van Buren about the verbal combat. He had been accustomed for years to write reports on the floor of the Senate. Now, he sat behind Benton when he rode in from Silver Spring to visit the Senate to enjoy the proceedings. Blair and Benton could disagree on the Proviso, but they believed alike on the subject of slavery, in regard to the Union and on the course of Calhoun. Van Buren sent his son, Martin, down to Silver Spring to stay two months during the winter so that he could be under Blair's tutelage and protection. Van Buren's letter to Blair in which he discussed Benton was an assuring one. He would "glory in the Col's success," for "certainly he deserves our good wishes in an eminent degree, independent of the good of the Country which cannot fail to be promoted when he has his own way."[3] But Blair had cause for worry about Benton's enigmatic course. He was in line for the presidency in 1848, yet he refused to flatter the authorities possessing the power to make or mar him; and he proposed to head the forces that fought Mexico and then refused to accept a generalship.

Van Buren did not forget his defeat at Baltimore in 1844. He

[2] Treat MSS. [3] Van Buren MSS. Jan. 14, 1847.

thanked God that he did not hold a grudge. "I am only sorry for my country," he said, "to see personal feelings so rampant" as they were in the late winter of 1847. In the same breath, however, he acknowledged that the enemies who defeated him possessed "Kantankarous" dispositions.[4]

Van Buren lived approximately eighteen miles from Albany. He wanted to give himself up to the pure enjoyment of his farm and live-stock. But Lindenwald was too close to the Albany clique that intended to rule or ruin politics in the state. His peace of mind was disturbed too often by Hunker attacks on his son, "Prince John," and his friend, A. C. Flagg, who was Comptroller of New York.[5] Blair at Silver Spring was in a similar position. The ills which befell his party and the attacks of the Polkites on his political friends worried him. The failure of Ritchie to cope with them in a satisfactory manner confirmed him in the belief that Polk had grievously erred in the disestablishment of the *Globe*. Furthermore, the situation in Missouri was disturbing. A tremendous fight against Benton was under way there. It might endanger the political prospects of Frank and Montgomery, for they had cast their lot with the "Old Roman."

Factional hatreds disrupted the Democracy in New York. A newspaper war engulfed the state in 1847. At a mass convention in Herkimer, the Barnburners resolved that they believed in the dignity of free labor; "that free white labor cannot thrive upon the soil as slave labor; and that it would be neither right nor wise to devote new territories to the slave labor of a part of the States, to the exclusion of the free labor of all the States." The Whigs, under the able leadership of Thurlow Weed, prodded the Democrats as much as possible. Edwin Croswell of the powerful Albany *Argus* supported the Hunkers. After 1843, the Van Burens favored the radical Albany *Atlas* edited by the witty and caustic William Cassidy, who advocated the cause of the Free-Soilers. In 1846 a Whig governor was elected, a sign of what might be expected in 1848.

[4] Van Buren MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Mar. 3, 1847.

[5] The Hunkers were conservatives. It is said they had a "hunkering" for office and remained loyal to the Baltimore nominee in the hope that their "hunk" might be satisfied. The Barnburners were radicals who supported the Wilmot Proviso, who opposed the extension of slavery, and who were willing, figuratively speaking, to burn their barns to get rid of the rats.

2

The tide was flowing favorably for Whigs and Radicals elsewhere. Giddings of Ohio found himself unable to respond warmly enough to the grateful outpourings of gratitude of the people of Bangor and Portland when he addressed them in 1846 on slavery, tariff, and Texas. Boston's Whigs begged him to speak to them on the same subjects.[6] Charles Sumner, Chase, Preston King, Tom Corwin, and Giddings each assailed the Polk administration during the years 1846 and 1847. Silver-tongued Corwin traveled up and down New England and across the West to agitate the minds of anti-slavery Whigs. The Wilmot Proviso became the paramount subject on the stump, at dinners, on the streets, and at the crossroads.

Slavery had at last become the dominant issue. One more great attempt was to be made by the Democracy for harmony within its ranks. In that attempt Franklin Pierce failed to become the Moses of his party. Clay, in answer to a letter from Giddings, expressed his inability to find a solution to the terrible problem. "I regret," he said, "as much as any one does the existence of slavery in our country, and wish to God there was not a single slave in the United States, or in the whole world. But here the unfortunate institution is, and a most delicate and difficult affair is it to deal with." What would become of the helpless emancipated slaves, was the tormenting and unanswered question.

Strong leaders had reached the stage in which they were tired of reservations and equivocations. Preston King cared not whether the presidential candidate was Whig or Democrat so long as he was a Wilmot Proviso man. Charles Francis Adams was fully prepared for any movement from any quarter to support the principles of the Proviso. He believed the Democracy should by all means avoid a "wild-goose project" of "trying Van Buren."[7] William Cullen Bryant opened the columns of his New York *Evening Post* to the speeches of John Van Buren, and young Samuel J. Tilden, who was instrumental in joining John Bigelow and Bryant in partnership in the publication of that paper. At Albany Cassidy was forcing Croswell to his knees in preparation

[6] George W. Julian, *The Life of Joshua Giddings* (Chicago, 1892), 198.
[7] Julian, *Giddings*, ch. 8.

to driving him out of journalism in 1856. The scholarly Charles Sumner, lawyer and editor, was beginning to work his way in the Senate, where he was to dominate for years in the most critical period in our history since the Constitutional period. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was now making his entry into national politics as a member of the House. William H. Seward and Stephen A. Douglas were becoming seasoned, and a group of young fire-eaters from the South were getting ready to demand national recognition of their so-called "just rights." Calhoun, Cass, Clay, Benton, Crittenden, and Webster were in their last stages. Three of them were yet to do effective and valuable work. The Whig press was sectional, and old Ritchie stubbornly held onto his theory of state-rights.

Van Buren became perturbed over the rash utterances which his son John was making in the fall of 1847. John had become conspicuous in politics. His gift of oratory, his parentage, and his ready wit made him popular. Quips and jibes sprinkled his speeches. His tongue-lashings were unmerciful. He denounced his competitor at the bar without respect or feeling, and then greeted him with a smile and wave of the hand after the trial. He deeply resented the humiliation of his father at Baltimore in 1844. His father's enemies were his own in 1848, and he made open war on all of them who were Hunkers.

The elder Van Buren begged Blair, for whom John had the greatest respect and admiration, to give his son sound advice while he was at Silver Spring, where he stayed while he was arguing a case before the Supreme Court at Washington. Blair, who had read the young man's speeches and admired them, was delighted to have the opportunity to advise John. He was ready to congratulate, not to admonish, him.

Another matter of concern disturbed Van Buren. Colonel Benton was enraged by the arrest of his son-in-law, John C. Frémont. This unfortunate affair had arisen over differences between General Kearney and Frémont in California. Van Buren had hoped that Benton would be drafted for President by his party.[8] Van Buren said that he had no heartburnings and no desire for the office; that he preferred his quiet life at Lindenwald; and he was probably sincere in his assertions.

[8] Van Buren MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Nov. 6, 1847.

The Jackson-Blair-Van Buren-Benton group had understood in 1840 that Benton was to be elected in 1848. Blair was now advising with Benton very often. But the Missourian was too much like a prancing horse; he could not be curbed by Blair or any one else. Polk was right in his decision in the Kearney-Frémont episode, but the announcement of his approval of the court's decision [9] alienated Benton from him forever. Benton was confirmed in his opinion that Polk was a stiff little nonentity, and Polk wrote in his diary that Benton was "selfish and wholly unprincipled."

Blair, too, had decided that Polk was a "little mole." [10] The party, he said, was headed for defeat. Men were intriguing for selfish gains and to set up Polk for a second term. He told Kentuckians that Clay's chances to defeat Polk in 1844 were promising until he ruined them by his "no indemnity" speech on Mexico. "Cass is chuck-full of presidential glory," he wrote to Van Buren. Old Buck, he declared, wanted the office of President, but he had only a "body-guard" to support him. This was good news for Van Buren, who still believed that the arch-intriguers at Baltimore were Cass and Buchanan. Blair believed the policy of the Democracy would be largely one of dissimulation. As true Democrats would stand aloof, he proposed to Van Buren on December 9, 1847, his solution to cure the party of its corruption: [11]

> In my opinion it is the true policy of all who would redeem the democracy to separate from the Polk concern— It ought to be made manifest that the cause of the country can be sustained without a pack of perfidious selfish, heartless men, who have no cause but that of their own ambition— I believe that the ultimate good of the party & the country may be more effectually served by putting a wall between us & the persons who now but pretend to represent the Democracy. It is the true interest of the nation that all that is vicious in the conduct of the powers . . . should be exposed, and it is the interest of our chiefs & leaders that they should let the people understand that they do not countenance the Administration in anything that it has done wrong, or anything that it may propose, which they do not approve.

It was dangerous from a political point of view for Blair to revolt against his party. He had shown no mercy to deserters

[9] Frémont was sentenced to dismissal from the army for mutiny.
[10] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Jan. 29, 1848.
[11] *Ibid.* Blair to Van Buren.

when he edited the *Globe*. "Carry the war into Africa" had been his slogan, and many a man had fallen in his fight for ascendancy as a result of war with his own party. Should he risk his high position as a private counsellor? Should he jeopardize the rich opportunities of his sons? They were rising rapidly in Missouri. He hoped to see them come to Washington as the representatives of the people.

But the black cloud of slavery hung over the nation and threatened to destroy the freedom of the laboring man. The vital economic and social interests of the common people were at stake. His ownership of slaves did not lessen Blair's love for pure democracy and the Union. He had from the beginning opposed Polk's fraternization with the Calhoun wing of the party. Now that the younger Southerners were more outspoken against the North than Calhoun, the great South Carolinian, Blair prayed for a Jackson. He read and re-read Jackson's letters and documents. There he found a draft of the famous message on nullification and a copy of his own exposition on that message. He was thrilled with the thought of the great victory. If Kendall would only hurry with his life of Jackson! He was slow, terribly slow. Bancroft did not have time to write a biography of Jackson. Blair fully determined that he would write the immortal biography of his immortal hero. And so he began to classify the mass of material which he had stored in barrels. Day after day, and night after night, he worked at it. But the work was immeasurably slow. He had never written a lengthy biography of any man. He was no researcher. He could not reach the point where his facile pen could trace the history and delineate the character of the great Jackson. His lungs bled once in a while. That was fair warning! Exercise, exercise in the open. Daily, he rode forth with his wife at his side. And daily they rode in a gallop down Pennsylvania Avenue; she to visit with friends, he to talk politics on the street, in Benton's home, or in the halls of the Capitol. Days passed into weeks, and weeks into months. The presidential election approached. Events in the Senate and New York state were compelling attention. The time for action was at hand. Again the proposed life of Jackson was put aside.

The debate on the Three Million Bill in the Senate had claimed the attention of the senators for days. Calhoun and Andrew P.

Butler stood firm for the right of the South to extend slavery in any new lands to be acquired. Southern Whigs opposed the acquisition of territory. The representatives of some of the states had been instructed against the extension of slavery to any newly acquired territory. Senator Corwin believed the North and South had reached an *impasse*. Neither side dared to budge for fear of endangering its principles. Senator John A. Dix argued cogently for the extension of our territory to the Pacific and the exclusion of slavery from the new territory. Benton no longer visited Polk. The breach between the two men was beyond healing.

Blair became agitated over the debate which raged in the Senate. He confided to Van Buren that he would like to see his old enemy, Clay, returned by the Kentucky legislature to meet Calhoun. No other man could attack Calhoun's "treasonable projects" like Clay. "I think he would do it both because he has always leaned towards emancipation and against Calhoun." Blair possessed the spirit of forgiveness in this trial of the Union to the extent that he would have rejoiced to see Clay come back to the Democracy. He, furthermore, wanted the Democrats to clinch their hold on Taylor at once. He hobnobbed with Jefferson Davis, who was Taylor's son-in-law. He sometimes shared a seat with Davis in the Senate when he visited at the Capitol. Davis heartily agreed that Taylor *should* be a good Democrat. Blair thought Taylor *would* make a true Democrat and explained to Davis that "Democrats of high standing & great influence had favorable opinions of the General in connexion with the Presidency." [12] "Yes," replied Davis, "he has always claimed to be a Jefferson Democrat—& if he had good & true men about him, he would prove a second Jackson for whom he always had the highest admiration." Davis and Senator Niles suggested that Blair should supersede Ritchie as their party editor. Davis said Taylor "abhorred Old Ritchie and did not think so well of the Administration because of the evident preparation to sacrifice him if defeated at Buena Vista." Blair was cautious, however, and remarked in a letter to Van Buren that "the General I think must get out & come to us —We can't go in for him." Blair would have rejoiced in a victory

[12] Van Buren was thought of by Blair. Taylor had avowed himself a mild Whig as early as August 3, 1847.

of a Whig general in the capacity of a Democratic President, but he believed that "defeat, in a fight under a downright hard fisted dutch democrat would probably be better in the long run, than a meritorious triumph."

A letter in the Blair manuscripts which was written by Van Buren (February 1, 1848) explains what he thought of the ex-editor's plans for the disruption of the Democracy. The important part of it runs thus: "The more I reflect upon the subject the more I am satisfied that you have pointed to the only door from which we can escape a continuance of the present state of things." In other words, the Northern wing of the Democracy must revolt against the Southern wing controlled by Polk and the strong pro-slavery men.

Blair received a letter from Missouri just before Van Buren's letter of approval came to Silver Spring. The Blairs of Missouri were in a death struggle with the administration forces which were pitted against Benton. Frank, the most radical of the Blairs, proposed to force the Democracy back to its position before the Baltimore convention of 1844. Blair went immediately to see his friend, John A. Dix, about attacking Polk through the press. Dix dissented. He believed that the administration would "fall of itself under the federal party." That idea was repugnant to Blair. The honest Democracy should not inherit the shame. "I do not think it impossible," he wrote, "to build up the party & triumph if we but throw off this 'mortal coil' but at all events a good lesson would be taught for the failure to warn low intrigue of its fate, &, we should punish treachery in the only way it can be reached in the present occasion by stripping it of its illgotten spoil & exposing it in nakedness & infamy."

There was no more time to be lost. Whig presses were hastening to the support of Taylor. Every man, woman, and child seemed to be calling for old "Rough and Ready." Men were saying that nothing but death could prevent him from being elected President.

3

Van Buren's two sons, John and Martin, visited at Silver Spring before the Barnburners met at Utica on February 16. The faithful

were all in high spirits; "they will doubtless talk plain upon every subject they speak of," wrote Van Buren on the seventeenth.[13]

The enthusiastic Barnburners declared their "uncompromising hostility to the extension of slavery" into free territory. Wright, Benton, and Dix were praised for their course in regard to slavery and the Mexican War. A full set of delegates for New York were chosen for the Baltimore convention. John Van Buren delivered the opening address. Blair was delighted with it, and after reading it, hurriedly wrote Van Buren: "I think it impossible that it could be surpassed." It pressed "home a just retaliation for ingratitude without complaint or even regret—for [a] powerfully condensed statement of the inherent principles of our party—which like the dormant force in powder only requires when compressed, to be lighted by a spark to overthrow all opposers." He fully expected the explosion to blow the "bastard dynasty" out of Washington.[14]

The enthusiasm of John Van Buren for the cause of Free-Soilism "seemed to endow him with ubiquity." John Bigelow recognized him as the coryphæus of the movement. But he also said that "his birth, his accomplishments, his wit and his unbounded self-assurance made him unhappily the Alcibiades of his time."[15]

While a youth, John was a pet in society. Alexander pictures him as an expert in the billiard room, "the centre of wit, and the willing target of beauty," while he attended college. When Martin Van Buren became minister to England he took John with him. John was called "Prince John" after he danced with Princess Victoria at a ball at the court of London. The highest nobility welcomed him in its social circles. He was at ease as the leader in a ballroom, at a dinner, or in the forum.

"His bland and convulsing wit" enlivened every convention and each campaign in which he participated. His biting tongue commanded by a frank and bold mind swayed audiences or stung those whom he made the butt of his jibes. His knowledge was as startling as its lack of profoundness. While he did not depend on his father's political prestige, he profited by it. His eloquence

[13] Van Buren MSS. Van Buren to Blair.
[14] *Ibid.* Blair to Van Buren, Feb. 29, 1846.
[15] *Retrospections of an Active Life,* 86-87.

gained him many lawsuits and he became the peer and opponent of the noted lawyer, Charles O'Conor. He was a superb crusader. Henry Wilson remembered him as "the bright particular star of the revolt" of the Free-Soilers. "He was not an impassioned orator. He spoke deliberately, and rarely with animation or with gesture; and his voice, high pitched and penetrating, was neither mellow nor melodious. But he was marvelously pleasing. His perennial wit kept his audiences expectant, and his compact, forceful utterances seemed to break the argument of an opponent as a hammer shatters a pane of glass." [16]

The revolt got well under way during the interim between the Utica convention of February 16, and the Baltimore convention of May 22, 1848. Van Buren gave up his lingering hope that Benton could be nominated. Blair urged John and Frank to work safely and effectively for the cause. The "little Mole" must be unseated with all of his gang. The two Van Burens and Tilden prepared an address which the Barnburners in the state legislature of New York published as their own when the assembly adjourned. This address defended the Independent Treasury, advocated the effective prosecution of the war, and demanded the exclusion of slavery from the Mexican cession. It "marked the definite [public] pronouncement of the elder Van Buren in favor of Free Soil." [17]

That two sets of delegates would be sent from New York to represent the Democracy at Baltimore was certain. The Hunkers refused to accept the Barnburner delegation as representative of the Democratic party in the state. They chose another set of delegates which they claimed to be the true representatives of the Democracy. Each faction hoped to be seated by the convention. The Barnburners were now nationally known and watched by the politicians with increasing interest. Calhoun looked for a defeat at the hands of the Whigs as a result of the defection in New York.[18] There were many candidates for either of the Whig or the Democratic nomination. Cass was the leading Northern "doughface" seeking the nomination at Baltimore. He steadfastly

[16] De Alva Stanwood Alexander, *A Political History of the State of New York* (4 vols., New York, 1906), II, 128-30.

[17] Donovan, *Barnburners*, 99.

[18] C. B. Going, *David Wilmot Free-Soiler* (New York, 1924), 302.

refused to swallow the Wilmot Proviso. That made him acceptable to the Southern Democracy.

The friends of Levi Woodbury were awake to his availability. He had played for Southern votes in a letter which he allowed to be published. The Democrats in the Massachusetts legislature unanimously nominated him for the presidency on the night of March 8. Thenceforth his hat was in the ring.[19]

Montgomery Blair naturally supported Woodbury because of family ties and because he did not wish to revolt against the regular party to the extent to which Frank and his father would go. The elder Blair reluctantly decided to support Woodbury. Mrs. Montgomery Blair wrote to her father that Montgomery had received a letter from his sister Betty,[20]

> saying her father had been to see Col. Benton, who positively declined being a candidate for the Presidency & had selected you as the most suitable man of the old Jackson Democracy to be put up—he said he would write to the New York barn burners & urge yr nomination upon them.

Blair did not want Dallas, Woodbury, Cass, Buchanan, or any other compromiser with the South. "The Rottens" at Washington must all go. He frankly confessed that Frank would make a better president than either Dallas or "Old Buck." His greatest disappointment was in Benton's refusal to make the race. He had planned for eight years to seat Benton in the White House, and the blasting of those hopes left him stranded. Taylor was going off at last to the Whigs. Van Buren was the only man left, and he assured Blair that he wished neither the presidential office nor to be known as a leading rebel in the party. It would defeat their purpose, he wrote Blair, if the people learned that he (Van Buren) was heading a revolt. They would accuse him of seeking revenge.

Blair found Van Buren quite willing, however, to urge and to participate in party revolutionary measures, if he could stay behind the scenes. Van Buren preferred to see John Van Buren, Tilden, Flagg, Cambreleng, Preston King, and the Blairs perform in the open field. He loved his Lindenwald too much to lead the

[19] Blair MSS. Chas. L. Woodbury to ? [probably his father] Mar. 8, 1848.
[20] *Ibid.* St. Louis, Mar. 3, 1848.

fight voluntarily. Blair was of the opposite character. He was bold, defiant, adroit, and vitriolic, all in one. He led his sons to battle and fought with them in the front ranks. Van Buren was afraid of personal issues. He knew, too, that the people would rally to the defense of Polk if he were attacked on the causes of the war with Mexico. He shrank from making that an issue.

Blair now opposed Polk for these three reasons: (1) collusion with Calhoun's forces, (2) appointments of Hunkers in New York, and (3) on general issues arising from the debate on the Proviso. His personal relations with Polk in relation to the *Globe* had less to do with his course than is generally believed. Ritchie proposed to reintroduce him as the editor of the administrative organ, and went out to Silver Spring where he walked and talked with Blair, but Blair curtly refused to consider it. The treaty with Mexico gave him a clear issue based on the principle elaborated in the Proviso. On this ground he proposed to attack the Hunkers. To that Van Buren agreed heartily. He felt that the time for the open breach had come when he wrote to Blair on April 8: "I agree with you freely in the expediency & I will add the necessity, of meeting the question referred to at this time. The honor & welfare of the Republic demands that it should be speedily disposed of & we can never have a better opportunity. The advocates of the objectionable doctrine have put themselves in a manner very offensive, & extremely indefensible, & they should be made to feel the impropriety of their conduct." But still, he must be kept in the background.

At this critical juncture Blair fell ill. His progress in instigating the revolt was necessarily slow. Montgomery and his wife and child had been ill with fever in St. Louis. Benton was relying on the Blairs to keep Missouri in line. After Montgomery recovered his normal health, he refused to say a word about the presidency. Frank complained of him and wrote to his father for information, saying that, if they were to have a Northern candidate, Van Buren was the man for the next President. This letter Blair proudly forwarded to Van Buren.[21]

A meeting of the Barnburners in Van Buren's home county practically forced him into the open. Communications were com-

[21] Van Buren MSS. Apr. 22, 1848.

ing from several states asking him to become a candidate. John Van Buren and his uncle, William Van Buren, refused to be quieted and participated in all meetings for the purpose of agitating the candidacy of Van Buren. John outdid himself, confided Van Buren to Blair. His friends asked him what to do; he counselled peace, but that was beyond the question at that late date. He wrote instructions for John to follow at Baltimore. He told his friends to refuse to support Cass, Dallas, or Buchanan if either was nominated. It is interesting to find every Northern candidate of compromising tendencies read out of the party in that document.

The Barnburners at Baltimore were to be guided by Van Buren's advice. Tilden and John Van Buren were there. Blair went as a delegate from Maryland, and with the openly avowed purpose of ousting the Rottens at Washington. Montgomery went to advance the cause of his father-in-law. Senators, Representatives, and government officials rode over to Baltimore to observe or to take part in the activities.

The convention was faced with some difficult questions. From one to three sets of delegates were there to represent a state. New York had two sets of delegates representing the Hunkers and Barnburners. The members of the convention did not wish to alienate either faction. Woodbury had hoped that the difficulty would be solved before May 22, but he was disappointed.[22] The convention knew that it faced defeat if it lost New York. And here were two delegations each demanding recognition as the only rightful one to represent its state. After wrangling until May 24, the convention voted to seat both delegations giving each man a half vote. The Barnburners withdrew in a huff, and the Hunkers soon followed them.

The two-thirds rule was adopted by a vote of 175 to 78. Woodbury said that it would probably lead to a compromise candidate who would stand a better chance of victory. The first national committee was set up to take charge of the canvass and of the interests of the party. The friends of Van Buren and Cass controlled the convention. Blair and the Kentucky delegates pushed the interests of William O. Butler of Kentucky. His boom, like

[22] Treat MSS. Woodbury to Treat, Apr. 18, 1848.

others, was too early to be successful. Men despaired of ever reaching a satisfactory decision. Confusion and bitterness, charges and counter-charges, reigned supreme for nearly three days and nights. Professor McGrane says that a committee composed of Cass and Van Buren men went to Washington to entreat Allen of Ohio to accept the nomination which they claimed they could deliver. Allen was awakened at midnight. As he sat on the edge of the bed, dressed in his night clothes, he listened in the dim candlelight to their plea to save the party. What a chance! But he refused to betray his friend Cass. "I am for Cass until the end," he said, "and if you really want to serve me you will go back to Baltimore and nominate him!" They did return, and Cass was nominated on the fourth ballot. General Butler of Kentucky was nominated for Vice-President on the first ballot.[23]

The platform was conservative and Southern in tone. A few resolutions were added to the platforms of 1840 and 1844. The war with Mexico was declared necessary and just because it was the result of "years of insult and injury." Yancy of Alabama reworded Calhoun's doctrine on slavery and offered it in a resolution as a plank in the platform. Treat made the only speech of great length against it.[24] The convention defeated it by a vote of 216 to 36. Squatter sovereignty was thus turned down by the party's delegates, who nominated a man believing in that theory as an acceptable one to settle the slavery question.

Allen went to see Cass after his nomination and gained the cognomen of "Fog Horn Allen" by speaking in Philadelphia where the Whigs tried to drown his voice with steam whistles. Treat persuaded Benton to accompany him to New York to induce Van Buren to support the nominee. Treat hurried on to Portsmouth to interview Woodbury. Benton spoke in New York City for Cass, and went to see Van Buren at Lindenwald. The latter refused to see Allen as well as to heed Benton's lukewarm advice to support the party nominee. Woodbury adhered to strict party principle in his support of Cass and begged his friends to forget their defeat as soon as possible.[25] Cass submitted his brief

[23] Reginald Charles McGrane, *William Allen, a Study in Western Democracy* (Columbus, 1925), 128-29.

[24] Memorandum, Treat MSS.

[25] Treat MSS. "Notes" by Treat; Cass to Treat, July 3, 1848; McGrane, *Allen*, 130.

letter of acceptance to Treat for correction. They wrote it to agree with the party platform; to pledge the nominee to stand for only one term; to explain the differences between the Whigs and Democrats as being Hamiltonism vs. Jeffersonism; and to beg the Democracy to support the principles and compromises of the Constitution.[26]

Of the possibilities for nominations among Northern Democrats, Cass was the least acceptable to Blair and Van Buren. John Wilson had begged Van Buren a few days before the national convention to allow him to present his name at Baltimore. Gideon Welles and Wilmot had entreated him to allow them the use of his name. Wilmot knew of no other man in the ranks of the Democracy to whom he could give his support. Van Buren had steadfastly refused to acquiesce in these entreaties.[27]

The nomination of Cass "sounded like a challenge" to Van Buren. He was too proud and too much in earnest not to accept that challenge. The South had dominated the party without effective opposition long enough. It was in control at Baltimore in 1848, just as it had been in 1844. Northern Democrats had to kneel to the South to win a nomination.[28] Van Buren's Texas letter was the result of his fear of Southern influence in Congress in the extension of slavery. Was New York still to suffer at the hands of a dictatorial group of pro-slavery men? Could the Free-Soilers win by throwing the election into the House of Representatives? His friend Blair would rather see a Whig, as much as that was repugnant to him, in the presidency than old Cass.

Frank Blair wrote his father that the young Democrats were keenly disappointed over the nominations at Baltimore. Blair enclosed the letter for Van Buren, writing as he did so that "you may have the echo of an honest heart to the Baltimore invocation." "Frank is a sample," he said, as he continued, and

> The feeling he expresses, almost persuades me, that a general revolt is possible, and if the opinion should become prevalent, that the dejection was so extensive as to render the defeat of Cass inevitable, the ticket would be increasingly abandoned by that

[26] Andrew C. McLaughlin, *Lewis Cass* (Boston, 1892), 241.

[27] Van Buren MSS. John Wilson to Van Buren, May 9, 1848; Van Buren to Wilson, May 15, 1848; Going, *Wilmot,* 320; Donovan, *Barnburners,* 103.

[28] Blair MSS. Jas. M. Broadhead to Woodbury, May 13, 1848.

portion of the Northern Democracy, which would resist the everlasting denunciation of the south on the presidency and especially of all such as would oppose the extension of slavery as the certain means of perpetuating it— Would it not be well then for our Utica friends to propose a general convention, (say in September), of all those who would make common cause on these two points? By fall, the fate of the Cass ticket will have been ascertained— If utterly hopeless, all honest hearts would then turn to the new nomination with expectation— It will be seen that it will be impossible to beat Taylor but by presenting the cause of some true northern man—would it not be well in the meantime not to confine the Utica *recommendation* to a single individual? Why not suggest a strong name in several States, any one of which would be acceptable to New York? Say Genl Pierce of N. H.—Dodge of Wisconsin—Wilmot of Pa—Brinkerhoff of Ohio—(Morton?) of Massachusetts [Morton was of Indiana]— I do not put these names to stand—better suited names may occur to the Convention at Utica.

Blair was a few days ahead of Van Buren. The former was well apace with Tilden, Preston King, John Van Buren, and John A. Dix.

The returning Barnburners held a monster mass-meeting in City Hall Park in New York City. They were opposed to Cass who stood for local self-determination of slavery in acquired territories. To that, the Barnburners cried, "The lash has resounded through the halls of the Capitol!" Samuel Young declared, "A clap of political thunder will be heard in this country next November that will make the propagandists of slavery shake like Belshazzear." Before an enthusiastic crowd that cheered them at every thrust, orators were loud in their denunciations of the followers of Cass. The populace was sympathetic. A resolution was carried in the heat of the excitement to call a convention at Utica to perfect an organization to prevent a repetition of the treason of 1844.

A group of Van Buren's friends again approached him in an appeal to accept a nomination. Again, he positively refused,[29] explaining that

> The determination announced in 1844 in my letter to the New York Committee, advising my friends to write in the support of Mr. Polk, to regard my public life as forever closed was made upon the

[29] Van Buren MSS. Van Buren to Samuel Waterbury, *et al.*, June 20, 1848.

most mature reflection & with an inflexible determination to adhere to it, to the end.

He nevertheless wrote a strong letter for the Utica convention to be held on June 22, in which he arraigned the convention at Baltimore and discussed the slavery issue in the new territory; David Dudley Field read it to the convention. It created a profound impression in the convention and on the country. A platform of sixteen hundred words was adopted, the greater portion of which was devoted to a defense of the Wilmot Proviso. All men who believed in their principles were invited to coöperate with the Free-Soilers. The members of the convention included the better portion of the strong men in the Democracy of New York. They were the men who were to aid in the formation of the Republican party in the fifties. They nominated Van Buren for the presidency in spite of his objections.

The country was electrified. The Whigs were jubilant, and the Cass Democrats gloomy. Some men were shocked and others sniffed at the honesty of Van Buren's views on slavery. Blair hurried off to Washington to talk with his friends. He found Benton and Allen in agreement in principle with Van Buren but, owing to expediency, forced to remain outwardly loyal to Cass. Allen thought he had to support Cass in order to have a chance to be reëlected in Ohio. Dix was happy. "To my mind," said Blair to Van Buren, "this appears the greatest act of your life." He had Montgomery to stop at Silver Spring after the Baltimore convention to be advised, but his fatherly advice was not heeded until Van Buren's letter reached them. It convinced Montgomery that the time was ripe to resist the intrusion of slavery. "If you stand as champion, as I hope you will," wrote Blair, "notwithstanding your absolute refusal I have no doubt that an impulse will be given to the honest cause of the true Democracy which will soon be signalized by a glorious victory" in the rise of a new party to defeat both of the old ones.

Meantime the Whig national convention met at Philadelphia on June 7, and wisely wrote no resolutions into a party platform. The nomination of Taylor was a foregone conclusion. The Whig press, county and state conventions, and the voice of the voting

population called for their rough old hero. The convention passed over Clay, who was battle-scarred, worn, old, and too well known. It never offered Webster any more than twenty-two votes, although he would gladly have accepted the nomination. He had been too positive and active in his career. General Winfield Scott was a likely candidate, but he failed to appeal as strongly to the American Democracy as his Whig associate.

Taylor was placed before the voters as the people's candidate. They were informed that he was a candidate without regard to party limits or party questions. Clay and Webster ill-disguised their chagrin at his nomination. Lowell in the *Bigelow Papers* described Taylor's position thus: [80]

> Ez to my principles, I glory
> In hevin' nothin' o' the sort;
> I aint a Wig, I aint a Tory,
> I'm jist a canderdate, in short.

The psychological appeal to the populace of Taylor as old "Rough and Ready" can be compared only with that of Jackson as the "Old Hero" of New Orleans. Hundreds of Whigs, nevertheless, refused to vote for Taylor because he was not a pronounced anti-slavery man. Among the prominent men in Massachusetts to bolt the Whig party were Charles Sumner, Charles Allen, and Charles Francis Adams. They could not tolerate the nominee of a convention that had voted down the Wilmot Proviso. On the other hand, William H. Seward and Horace Greeley of New York led many of the wavering anti-slavery men to the support of Taylor rather than suffer under Van Buren's "guerrilla warfare."

The disgruntled Whigs joined the Barnburners in a convention which they called to meet at Buffalo, on August 9. It was "one of the most spectacular and remarkable gatherings of all that eventful period. It met, sat, and dissolved in an atmosphere of spontaneous, almost religious, enthusiasm reminding us of the Jacobin excitement of 1793 or the later 'craze' for free silver, or the 'Armageddon' campaign." The wildly enthusiastic delegates from every state in the Union met in a mammoth tent. The sweltering heat of August days in New York drove many of them

[80] Moorfield Storey, *Charles Sumner* (Boston, 1900), 57.

outside, where orators found their skill taxed to the uttermost to entertain the crowd.

It was a collection of strange political bed-fellows. The revengeful Barnburners outnumbered other factions. Among them were Samuel Young and John Van Buren, both of whom had received important offices from the hands of the Democracy. Benjamin F. Butler held a high office in Polk's government, but spoke against the administration and defied Polk to remove him. The roster of political leaders in New York present at the convention included Dean Richmond and Sanford E. Church. William Cullen Bryant of the New York *Evening Post* and William Cassidy and Henry Van Dyck led the press with their editorials. There were David Dudley Field and Samuel Tilden, Preston King and John A. Dix, Chase and Giddings of Ohio, and Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Charles Francis Adams presided over the mass-meeting while Chase acted as chairman of the convention proper.[81] To the unspeakable horror of every Hunker a negro by the name of the Reverend Mr. Ward participated in the deliberations of the convention. Gales and Seaton of the *National Intelligencer* on August 22, referred their readers to I Samuel, chapter 22, verses 1 and 2, for an account of the proceedings at Buffalo. Under their translation it read:

> 1. "Prince John" therefore departed thence, and escaped to Buffalo; and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.
> 2. And every one that was in distress and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men.

It was not uncertain as to what the delegates would say. The presence of abolitionists from the darkest type to those of a milder hue insured a strong plank on slavery. Butler reported resolutions which rang the death knell to the old organizations. In these the Barnburners demanded a free soil for a free people. They would emulate their fathers who won our independence, and, trusting in God, plant themselves on a platform of freedom in opposition

[81] Storey, *Sumner*, 59; Alexander, *op. cit.*, 238; McCormac, *Polk*, 643; Shepard, *Van Buren*, 366.

to the sectional platform of slavery. Slavery was to remain where it was; there must be no more compromises; free territory should forever remain free. Then came the memorable words which stirred the heart of William Lloyd Garrison: "We inscribe on our banner, Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men; and under it we will fight on and fight ever, until a triumphant victory shall reward our exertions." The selection of a suitable candidate to head the ticket was vitally important. A man was needed who could add the weight of experience and the dignity of character to the cause, one who enjoyed the confidence of the New York radicals, one who could command the respect of hopelessly dissatisfied Whigs and of the rankest abolitionists, and one who would probably win the support of the Liberal party that had nominated John P. Hale. The indicator pointed to Van Buren.

His position just before the convention was unenviable. His nomination at Utica was made against his earnest protests. Instead of extricating himself from the political broil he became more and more involved in it. A few days preceding the convention he begged Blair to visit him at Lindenwald for a consultation.[32] He wanted the convention at Buffalo to go on record as opposed to the extension of slavery, and to nominate some other than himself. Blair could not go. August 9 found him at Silver Spring writing to Van Buren that he hoped the New York movement would bring about a thorough reform. But he soon heard of the nomination of Van Buren to lead the Free-Soilers. His insistence that Van Buren accept the leadership of the revolt was not in vain. Thus far his schemes for a purification of the Democracy were successfully carried out. Charles Francis Adams was chosen as running mate.[33] Adams had been sent as a delegate from his father's home district. In New York he fell into company with Giddings. Both of them went to Buffalo opposed to the nomination of Van Buren. Thirty years after the convention Adams wrote of it: "There have been many assemblages since, far larger in numbers, and perhaps more skillful in their modes of operation; but for plain, down-right honesty of purpose, to effect high ends

[32] Blair MSS. July 26.
[33] Charles Francis Adams, *Charles Francis Adams* (Boston, 1900), ch. 6.

without a whisper of bargain and sale, I doubt whether any similar one has been its superior either before or since." It made an interesting spectacle to see the son of one of the oldest and bitterest adversaries of Van Buren as his partner on a presidential ticket.

The campaign was bitterest in New York, where the Hunkers revived the old Whig charges against Van Buren. The Hunkers were disgusted and horrified at the connivance of the "venerable leader of the party" with the "long-haired and wild-eyed abolitionists." Reverence changed to rage against the arch-apostate. Elsewhere the campaign was less bitter than that of 1844 had been. Before Van Buren was nominated he had attempted to mollify leading Democrats who might be brought to his support. This effort is shown in his letter to Samuel Medary, a very influential Democrat in the old Northwest Territory. As Van Buren had noticed the unfriendly attitude of Medary, he assured Medary of his esteem and good will and begged him to destroy the letter, a request which was not complied with.[34] Medary had carried the Jackson letter in his pocket recommending the nomination of Polk at Baltimore in 1844 if the party found it impossible to unite on Van Buren. As an old Jacksonian of powerful leadership and dynamic character he would have made Van Buren an able leader in his wing of the Democracy. No such good fortune as to win his support was to befall Van Buren.

Taylor erred in answering letters of inquisitors. These letters embarrassed his friends and threatened to ruin their chances for victory. Clay had made a fatal mistake with his letter from Alabama in 1844. The Whigs wanted no more such experiences. Weed wrote a letter purporting to come from Taylor, and explaining his views on public policies. The object of it was to disembarrass Taylor and the Whigs. The nominee signed it without a qualm.[35]

In July Cass believed that the defection among the Democrats in New York would react upon the Whigs rather than upon the Democracy. He believed the indignation of the party men at the

[34] Medary MSS. April 28, 1848. The Samuel Medary MSS. are in the Ohio Historical Society Library, Columbus.

[35] Harriet A. Weed (ed.), *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), 578-82.

seceders would unite the Democrats more firmly. He promised Treat that he would keep clear of all those local and personal disturbances.[36] His supporters hailed him as the champion and "Father of the West." The Detroit *Free Press* truthfully and loyally declared that, "The history of the Western States forms a part of his biography."

Cass, however, no longer enjoyed the full confidence of the voters of the Northwest. The New Englanders and the poor Southerners who formed the pith and marrow of this inland empire were fired by the spirit of freedom. They had fought for the extension of territory, but they turned upon the party that sponsored the war. The Puritan stock of Ohio sent Giddings to Congress. The spiteful gabble of the Whigs about renegades and apostates fired the zeal of the Free-Soilers who broke ground to make Ohio Republican. Giddings and Chase met Corwin and Ewing. Cass won the electoral vote of the state, but the Free-Soilers sent eleven members to the state legislature, where their votes resulted in sending Chase to the Senate of the United States to succeed Allen.

The issues in Missouri were complicated by the residue of the old relief difficulties of 1820-22. Those who had stood for hard money and supported Benton were known as Hards, and their opponents were Softs. The contest resolved itself into a battle for or against Benton. He had been elected to the Senate in 1845 by a margin of eight votes. Only strict party control saved him from defeat. David R. Atchison of the western border of the state was elected at the same time by a majority of thirty-four votes. Atchison became a leader of the anti-Benton faction and stood for the extension of slavery. Benton regretted the radical and impolitic action of Van Buren and his Barnburners at Buffalo. He looked upon the movement as purely sectional and dangerous to the peace of the country. Upon the request of friends he went to see Van Buren to persuade him to withdraw his support from the Barnburners on the ground that to lead it against the Democracy would impair any existing confidence between the Northern and Southern wings. At the same time Calhoun kept himself in touch

[36] Treat MSS. Cass to Treat, July 3.

with Benton's enemies. He was much concerned about the success of the press which opposed Benton. In July, 1849, he predicted for the latter the fate of traitors. He was glad that Benton had played the open traitor, for he had been false to the South for the last ten years. He believed that Benton lied about disunionists in the South. The slave-holding states were the "only portion of the Country that" had "a real & sincere attachment to the Union—the Union established by the Constitution." [87] The precariousness of Benton's position forced him to keep out of the camp of the Barnburners, though Blair assured Van Buren more than once that Benton "told me to-day" that he sympathized with "you in principle."

The Blairs appreciated Benton's friendship and fought a hard fight for him. Frank established and edited the *Barnburner,* the only paper of its kind in the West in 1848. He was assisted by William McKee, a native of New York and an experienced editor and publisher, a Free-Soiler of courage and ability, and by St. Louis Free-Soilers who aided him financially. The *Barnburner* created a sensation in the political world with its bold editorials. It failed in three months for lack of funds, but the seed which was to produce fruit in after-years was sown.

The Blairs gained the enmity of the "Fayette Clique," of Treat and of Atchison—all of whom were bent on the destruction of Benton's power. Woodbury found excuse for the revolting son-in-law only because of his "close personal relationships" to Blair and Van Buren. Surely, thought he, Montgomery could not believe in the "correctness or patriotism of their course in many respects."

Frank impetuously supported Van Buren and the Buffalo platform. He defended the right to dissent from the regular Democracy and asserted that the road to distinction and honor lay with the Barnburners. He lauded Van Buren as a statesman and Democrat of established reputation, fair and high-minded, and of avowed principles, a man who had been cheated out of the nomination in 1844. The new party, he said to an interested audience, had as much right to advocate the principle of free-soilism as our revolutionary heroes in 1776 had to fight for the single idea of lib-

[87] Treat MSS. Calhoun to Treat, July 9.

erty. The open road to liberty now lay in the direction of free labor and free land—in the restriction of slavery.[38]

In Massachusetts Charles Sumner won his spurs speaking for free-soilism, although he was not elected. "It is not for the Van Buren of 1838 that we are to vote," he declared, "but for the Van Buren of to-day—the veteran statesman, sagacious, determined, experienced, who, at an age when most men are rejoicing to put off their armour, girds himself anew and enters the list as a champion of freedom." David Wilmot won his election to Congress while he staunchly supported Van Buren in Pennsylvania. John P. Hale withdrew as the presidential nominee of the Liberty party and asked his followers to support Van Buren. He had been elected to the Senate as a Free-Soiler in 1847. John A. Dix, then a Democratic senator, confounded the Hunkers by his acceptance of the nomination for governor on the Barnburner ticket.

Enthusiastic young crusaders formed the "Young Men's Northern Light Association" of New York. They held grand mass-meetings nightly where the revival spirit led hundreds to join. Field, Butler, John Van Buren, and Tilden addressed them. Polk dismissed Butler for his activities in the campaign. The Albany *Atlas* called for a rally at headquarters every night, and adopted for its slogan, that of the party, "No Slave Territory—no more Slave States."

The worries of the administration multiplied as the campaign progressed. Marcy began to fear that the dismissal of Butler was a blunder.[39] The young Barnburners were very aggressive in New York. The strength of the Puritan-New England stock in the Ohio Valley was an uncertainty. "Ohio is safe for Cass and Butler, but we must work," wrote a supporter to John C. Rives.[40] The election in Vermont looked serious. The Jackson Democratic Association distributed campaign documents by tens of thousands to local associations throughout the states. Lives of Cass and Butler in English and German were sold. Barnburners

[38] F. P. Blair, Speech in Sept., 1848. Pamphlet in the Library of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

[39] W. L. Marcy MSS. Library of Congress. Marcy to P. M. Whetmore, Sept. 8, 1848.

[40] Blair-Rives MSS. D. A. Robertson, June 19, 1848.

and Democrats made their first appeal for the German vote. Speeches of local party leaders were sold at cost by the thousands. One by Senator Corwin in which he said Taylor could not carry a single free state unless he had promised to sign the Wilmot Proviso was widely demanded. A worker of Memphis wanted his state flooded with statements which proved Fillmore to be an abolitionist. A citizen of Florida begged for literature to counteract the Whig charges against Cass. Those charges included one that he favored the Wilmot Proviso. Give us documents to prove Taylor's "unfitness for civil office," pleaded John R. Haynes of Georgia. The Whigs were aggressive. The Jackson Democratic Association could not keep pace with them. A Mr. Ellis of Kentucky complained that his Congressional district was completely flooded with the speeches of Mangum, Webster, and other prominent Whigs. As Rives needed more money for the Association than the Democrats contributed, he consequently spent his own very freely.[41]

Blair was still a partner with Rives in the conduct of the *Globe*. They were publishing the most acceptable reports of Congressional proceedings. Blair's activities for Van Buren embarrassed Rives, who strained every nerve for Cass. The administration forces ostracized Blair, and he was forced to labor under a cloud. Threats of being read out of the party did not deter him. He dipped his pen in vitriol for Polk and his forces, and he supplied the New York *Evening Post* with letters on Van Buren and the principles for which the Barnburners stood. He believed that Polk and Ritchie were endeavoring to keep the North divided and the South united to control the government; and that the intriguers were about to accomplish their aims. The plausible method seemed to be to attack them at Washington. He, consequently, agitated the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. His hope for the election of Van Buren waned with the progress of the campaign. Labor as much as he would, he could not save Van Buren from defeat at the polls.

The Barnburners, however, were avenged for the humiliations which they and their chief received at Baltimore in 1844 and in 1848. Cass ran second to Taylor in the popular and electoral vote.

[41] Blair-Rives MSS.

Van Buren secured not a single electoral vote, and polled only 291,263 popular votes out of a total of 2,871,901. Cass lost New York, and with it the presidency.

The result was a temporary lesson to the Democracy. Factious leaders were ready to produce harmony at a price. "Do & say nothing to give offence to any wing of the democratic party," advised Woodbury.[42] "My day has gone by," wrote Cass, "I think I have sense enough to know that."

Blair and the Van Burens attributed the small vote of the Free-Soil party to Northern Democratic fear that the Whigs might be successful. The Democrats preferred Cass and the "Rottens" to Taylor and the Whigs. Van Buren accepted his defeat good-naturedly and wrote Blair that [43]

> Everything was accomplished by the Free Soil movement that the most sanguine friend could hope for & much more than there was good reason to expect.

He believed that Benton's chance to organize the whole Northern Democracy on the Free-Soil basis for 1852 could hardly be better.

[42] Treat MSS. To Treat, Dec. 5, 1848. [43] Blair MSS. Dec. 11, 1848.

CHAPTER XIX

The Compromisers

Never did there devolve on any generation of men higher trusts than now devolve upon us, for the preservation of this Constitution and the harmony and peace of all who are destined to live under it.—Daniel Webster, 1850.

I

The strain under which political affiliations and friendships labored from 1849 to 1861 caused them to snap and break asunder. The reformers of the thirties and forties forced the "peculiar institution" of slavery to the fore. Many honest men pondered over the question of what would be best for the United States. Should they allow the South to depart in peace, or should they compromise their principles to save the Union?

Blair knew that if he remained a partner of Rives, the rising animosities between anti-slavery and pro-slavery men would affect the welfare of the non-partisan *Globe*. He must either sell his share to Rives or persuade Rives to sell to him. More than once he permitted John A. Dix, Stephen A. Douglas, and others of his friends almost to persuade him to set up a press to be dedicated to the interests of the Northern Democracy. But the sage advice from Lindenwald kept him free to offer independent advice to the party. Your "independence should at all events be maintained," wrote Van Buren, for "your usefulness, now, is greatly promoted by it." [1]

When the political *Globe* was suspended, Blair and Rives continued their friendly relations in business in Jackson Hall. He trusted Rives with all business transactions and asked Rives for money when he needed it. The names of Mrs. Blair and Betty occur often on the pages of the old ledger, which shows that they had received ten or twenty dollars for this or that.

[1] Van Buren MSS., Blair to Van Buren, Mar. 24, 1850; Blair MSS., Van Buren to Blair, Mar. 3, and May 6, 1850.

The family spent money freely. The table was richly laden for throngs of guests. Rare wines filled the cellar. And the Blairs kept up with the fashions of the day. They had risen from poverty and obscurity to wealth and leadership in society in the District of Columbia. Thoughts of a possible return to poverty struck Blair with terror. The books at the *Globe* office showed that he had spent a quarter of a million dollars in fifteen years! "The Skeletons of my old check books rise upon my thoughts of nights," he said, "& drive repose from my pillow. I am sometimes filled with apprehensions that I may end my life as I began it, in pecuniary distress." [2]

Rives assured him that his finances were satisfactory. Still, Blair worried. If his condition were not so good as Rives said it was, he knew that he must make some arrangement to retrieve his affairs to insure independence in his old age. He begged Rives to invoice their joint holdings. The latter hesitated to dissolve partnership. These two giants of business and journalism were like brothers. The ability and shortcomings of one had supplemented those of the other in their fortunate venture.

Blair, nevertheless, wrote from Silver Spring to Rives on March 28, 1849, that the time had come. The letter is worth reading.[3]

> My connexion with the Globe and the expectation that it would be converted to the propagation of opinions against the extension of Slavery in places under the Jurisdiction of Congress concentrated the Representatives of the South against your objects & other political considerations connected with me prevented the union of the northern members in your support. My political opinions & associations have thus placed me in an attitude of hostility to your immediate interests as well as to the honorable ambition you indulge of identifying your life with Congress as its Reporter and to hand down the function to one of your children, educated by you for it. Were I to remain your partner, I must either thwart the fixed aims of your heart or sacrifice the independence of thought and action, which should be maintained by every man whom public questions may call to take part in them. The progress of the controversy in which I am involved & from which it is not in my notion to retreat threatens to make my position worse for the Globe at the next than it was at the last session— Painful then, as is our separation, I yield to the necessity of dissolving our partnership.

[2] Blair-Rives MSS., Blair to Rives, May 24, 1847. [3] Blair-Rives MSS.

As the business man of the concern, in whose judgment & justice I have implicit confidence, I must leave to you the suggestion of the terms of the arrangement & the execution— I will merely offer an outline, of what at this moment, strikes me as most accordant with the mutual interests which altered circumstances have produced. You should take the Globe & "all that it inherits"—debts due to it—contracts connected with it—Jackson Hall—the printing material—stocks of all sorts, on books & friends & etc—estimate the whole & fix for me in some proper mode as a fund drawing interest, whatever I may be entitled to— If from the contingent nature of the contracts of the Globe, they should be incapable of a safe estimation, then value whatever may be susceptible of more certainty & leave my income to rise or fall with the increase of denomination of the property of the existing contracts or such as may grow out of them.

There are two things I wish you to do with as much exactness as possible—ascertain what I may count upon as income from my share; for I mean to live within it & not touch the fund, even if I have to seek employment to earn the means of making it adequate, should it prove insufficient—and next I want you to put our whole arrangement in writing, so that there need never be a settlement between our families, when we go off the stage. . . .

In conclusion let me assure you that I shall always be as ready to exert myself to promote the interests of the Globe when it becomes solely yours as when it was wholly mine—and it is highly probable that I shall be much more able to serve than of late, as I cannot be charged justly with action in selfish objects.

I do not know the amount of money to which Blair was entitled. There were notes made in favor of the firm, outstanding book accounts, stocks, printing presses and type, paper, and printed *Congressional Globes,* and Jackson Hall. Rives paid $50,000 for the Hall and printing office. All of Blair's property, after the settlement, was valued, in his own words, at $50,000 "at the lowest estimate," and his stocks and "productive safe funds" were sufficient to give him an annual "income of $7,000." Rives was a magnanimous individual. Blair afterwards wrote to Van Buren that "Mr. Rives & myself terminated our Globe affairs most satisfactorily— He wanted to do more for me than I would allow—or than was necessary or proper."

2

Blair had four motives for disposing of his interest in the *Globe:*

First I wanted to settle & know what I was worth—next I did not wish to embarrass my partner with my anti slavery proclivity—3dly I did not want to be considered a hanger on of Congress for jobs—& 4thly I determined to take an attitude to enable me to fight a free soil battle, if necessary, without hurting any one allied to me by association of any sort.

The time seemed to be propitious for the reorganization of the party. Blair proposed to his friends that the Northern anti-slavery wing assume an aggressive leadership; meanwhile, his two sons spent many days at Silver Spring, where plans were carefully discussed before they returned to their homes. Frank returned to St. Louis while Montgomery and Benton laid plans to defeat the pro-slavery faction in Missouri. Van Buren wrote assuringly from New York that the Hunkers were in such a position that they would be forced to join the Barnburners.[4] Frank cheerfully wrote upon his arrival in St. Louis that:

Benton's prospects appear to be brightening very much and our friends are taking heart and courage. I consider the battle already fought and won— Calhounism is doomed to a most disgraceful defeat & with him will sink his pestilent people who have given us so much trouble.[5]. . .

While Blair formulated his plans to capture the Democracy, the principle of the Wilmot Proviso rapidly gained converts in the North. New societies of abolitionists were organized, newspapers were established, debating clubs were formed, all to spread the gospel of liberty. Resolutions passed by organizations and state legislatures poured into the offices of Congressmen. The South answered these activities with defiant words. Calhoun drew up a petition in which he set forth the demands of slave owners. It was signed by forty-eight Congressmen who joined him in their demand for the suppression of abolitionism, the return of fugitive slaves to their masters, and the guarantee that new territory should be opened to slavery. Calhoun informed a friend that, "We must force the issue on the North so as to know where we are to stand."[6] The legislature of Virginia passed resolutions in which it declared that, if the Wilmot Proviso was to be adopted and enforced, the Virginians would not submit "to

[4] Blair MSS. Oct. 8, 1849.
[5] Blair MSS. Frank Blair to M. Blair, (?), 1849.
[6] Calhoun *Correspondence, op. cit.*, 770.

aggression and outrage," and would meet them with a "determined resistance at all hazards and to the last extremity." Senator Butler of South Carolina felt his blood tingle when his friends at a dinner loudly cheered a toast to "a Southern Confederacy."

President Taylor inherited his territorial problems from President Polk. Congress had been unable to agree upon a disposal of the vast regions stretching over California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, parts of Colorado, of Oklahoma, of Wyoming, and of Kansas. Thousands left the East for the gold fields in California. They went in wagons, in carts, on horses, and on foot. The camp fires along the trail at night often resembled the lights of a village street. Dangers of starvation, exhaustion, fevers of the alkali reaches, and Indians did not deter them. Daniel Webster exclaimed: "There is within the history of mankind, within my knowledge, no instance of such an extraordinary rush of people for private enterprise to one point on the earth's surface." Reckless immigrants burned the grass, drove off the game or destroyed it, and polluted the streams. Cholera visited the moving trains. By the spring of 1850, forty graves could be passed in sixty miles. Relief parties in the East offered their assistance, but death continued to sweep across the plains. Skeletons of oxen and horses, wrecks of wagons, and bleaching bones of gold-seekers marked the highway to California.

The newspapers did the expected thing. The stream of humanity stretching across mountain and plain received sufficient notice to excite those who remained behind. The arrival of the *Georgia* was announced with the news that she carried one million in gold; the *Philadelphia* came with another million of gold dust. By April 1, 1849, California was reported to have produced four million dollars' worth of gold dust. Reports of this nature intensified the excitement. "A living stream of gold diggers has been passing this place," wrote a correspondent to the St. Louis *Republican,* "and our expresses from the frontiers represent every rod of the road between here [Fort Laramie] and Missouri occupied by white-top wagons." Thousands of others were sailing by the Isthmus or by Cape Horn. Mexicans, South Americans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans, and Chinese ran the race to the diggings. Indians went on a rampage, bandits plundered

at will, and drunks threatened the camps. Revolvers and bowie knives were protective agents until the Americans met in a convention at Monterey on September 3, 1849, to frame a constitution. The newly formed government excluded slavery and asked admission to the Union as a free state.

The President had passed through the New England states during the summer. Thurlow Weed and Seward convinced him that the slavocracy of the South was the aggressor. Not unlike the "Old Hero," he proposed to meet Southern threats of disunion with sternness. He proposed to blockade Southern ports and call on the states for volunteers. By such action the North was assured that he would not encourage the Southern radicals. His territorial plan would admit California as a free state and organize the remainder of the Mexican cession on a basis of squatter sovereignty. "My guide will be the Constitution," he said in his inaugural address, "which I this day swear to 'preserve, protect, and defend.' " He looked to Congress to "adopt such measures of conciliation as may harmonize conflicting interests and tend to perpetuate that Union which should be the paramount object of our hopes and affections." [7]

The Congress to which Taylor was turning was the last one in which "Old Bullion" would sit as a member. His state had grown away from him during his thirty years of service. Try as he would, Montgomery Blair found it "uphill work to maintain his principles & his position" in the state. Benton had been away from his constituency since 1847. Owing to the fact that he despised official favoritism, his enemies built an opposition machine which was soon to work smoothly and effectively. While Benton was taking strong ground against the majority in the Missouri legislature, the Blairs were straining every nerve for him. He failed to inform them of his exact plans for his reëlection; consequently, they assumed that he would support the principle of the Wilmot Proviso and make it a question of disunion with his opponents.[8]

Benton finally saw the handwriting on the wall. In the spring of 1849 he hurried to St. Louis to meet the "gathering storm

[7] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 2543-44.
[8] Van Buren MSS. M. Blair to Van Buren, May 12, 1849.

against him." The Missouri legislature had presented to him some resolutions on the subject of Texas to be used in the Senate in 1845. Again, in 1847, it passed others favorable to the maintenance of the Missouri Compromise line which prohibited slavery in our territory north of 36° 30′. His enemies seriously threatened his hold on the people.

The Calhounites in Missouri had unexpectedly lost their able ally when Shadrach Penn of the St. Louis *Reporter* died in 1846. They, nevertheless, used the event of his death advantageously. They persuaded the Benton men to join their St. Louis *Missourian* with the *Reporter*. The editor of the *Missourian* became editor of the new organ, which was given the appealing name of *The Union,* but Samuel Treat, associate editor of the *Reporter,* retained a large interest in the new paper. Soon the editor of the *Union* was ignominously dismissed and Treat assumed the responsibilities of editor. He purposely lulled the Benton men into acquiescence to the *fait accompli*. Frank Blair suspected the deception and treachery of the Calhounites, and led a group of ardent Benton Democrats against the "Rottens" who sought to unseat Benton.[9]

The movement for peace by the Calhounites was a mere subterfuge on their part. Hatred was as strong as ever when the sparring factions met in their first important political meeting in St. Louis after the amalgamation of their papers. Blair led the Hards against the Softs, Rottens, or Calhounites. Unfortunately for Benton the Softs chose a majority of the officials of the meeting on Jackson's Day as well as the nominee for governor of the state. With the office of governor went the power to appoint many powerful officials who could control the political power in the state. The stage was thus set to embarrass Benton. His enemies were determined that he must be instructed to do that which he could not do and retain his self-respect.

The Governor promptly appointed Calhoun men to high offices. Treat directed his editorial policy favorable to the slavery interests, and the leaders of the legislature passed the so-called Jackson-Napton resolutions on March 10, 1849, which instructed

[9] Clarence H. McClure, *Opposition in Missouri to Thomas Hart Benton* (Nashville, 1927), 146-58.

Benton how to vote. Blair, writing under the nom-de-plume of "Radical" in the columns of the Whig (St. Louis) Missouri *Republican,* accused the "conductors and controllers of the *Union*" as being the "chiefs in the plot." Benton scorned the idea of being instructed how to vote. His long experience in the Senate and his imperious nature fortified his mind against the reception of instructions from upstarts in Missouri.

The Jackson-Napton resolutions denied the right of Congress to legislate on the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia, or in the territories. They declared that any legislation affecting the right of a slave owner to carry his property into a territory was inconsistent and a violation of the "federal compact," "insulting to the sovereignty and dignity of the States thus affected," and "calculated to alienate one portion of the Union from another." Only the people living in a territory had the right to prohibit slavery in it. Missouri would be found in hearty coöperation with the slave-holding states in the mutual protection of these principles against Northern fanaticism. Benton and Atchison were instructed to observe these resolutions.

The Jackson-Calhounites held local meetings over the state in which the resolutions were endorsed purposely to preclude Benton's direct appeal to the people which they expected him to make upon his return to the state. The Whig papers expressed concern over the condemnation of Benton on his stand on slavery. "Not a voice" was raised against the resolutions or in "defense of Col. Benton outside of St. Louis." In that city the Blair brothers and other friends of Benton issued an address in support of Benton, but their position on slavery was so extreme that they injured rather than aided Benton's cause. Their able paper correctly traced the intriguing artfulness of the pro-slavery, anti-Benton clique and practically endorsed the Wilmot Proviso. A few of the Democracy's journals refused to publish it.[10]

It is unnecessary to say that Benton's innermost soul revolted at the repugnant resolutions. The Blairs had warned him of the seriousness of the situation. He reserved the denunciation of his enemies until he reached St. Louis. He firmly believed, with good reason, that Polk's administration and Calhoun had supported the

[10] McClure, *Benton,* 164-65.

opposition. In May he published a letter making a Jacksonian appeal to his constituents. From the resolutions, he declared, "I appeal to the people of Missouri,—the whole body of the people, —and if they confirm the instructions, I shall give them an opportunity to find a Senator to carry their wishes into effect, as I cannot do anything to dissolve the Union, or to array one-half of it against the other." [11]

Now Van Buren had fully expected Benton to make his race on a platform of principles enunciated in the manifesto of the Blairs and their friends. To do so would place him definitely in the Northern wing of the Democracy and clear his skirts of the dirt collected by his flirtation with Polk early in his administration. A triumph in Missouri under the existing circumstances, wrote Van Buren, "would be a more gratifying victory than any which has for a long time fallen to the lot of [a] public man." It would reflect glory upon Missouri if she broke the ascendancy of the slave states which had been "virtually, if not literally, the Lords paramount in the Republic" for an astonishingly long time. The "confiding Democracy of the North" had conceded to the South so long that it would require a bold measure to shake her loose from the Southern Democracy. Otherwise, they would have to wait until the "great change in agricultural, commercial, & physical condition of the slave holding states which [was] slowly but steadily & inflexibly accomplishing" could do it.[12]

Colonel Switzler wrote of the campaign thus begun as one "resulting in an upheaval of the political forces of the State and characterized by a bitterness of invective and popular excitement without parallel in the history of Missouri." Benton began his fight in Jefferson City, the capital of the state. He again made his appeal to the people while he spoke to a large audience. Governor King had surprised his friends by turning a somersault into Benton's camp, and arranged for this great speech that required twenty-three columns of space in the Jefferson *Inquirer*. The infuriated speaker denounced the Jackson resolutions as mere copies of those which Calhoun had introduced in the Senate in February, 1847. He used twenty-one of his twenty-three col-

[11] Meigs, *Benton*, ch. 21. [12] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Apr. 6, 1849.

umns of newspaper space on Calhoun as he exposed the inconsistency of Calhoun's record on the extension of slavery.

He solemnly declared that there should be "henceforth and forever, a high wall and a deep ditch, and no communion, no compromise" between him and the plotters who endorsed the resolutions. Hope of conciliation was gone. He, on the other hand, personally recognized slavery as "timid property," the owners of which should not be harassed with apprehensions for its safety. He "had made no slavery speeches in Congress and did not mean to make them"; he had been "taught to admire the founders of our government" in his early youth, and he said to that large throng, "I reverence them now; taught to value their work then, I worship it now—a Senator for thirty years, I cannot degrade the Senate by engaging in slavery and disunion discussions. Silence such debate is my prayer; and if that cannot be done, I silence myself." [13] He traveled hundreds of miles over the state. Everywhere he denounced the resolutions as "false in their facts, incendiary in their temper, disunion in their object, nullification in their essence, high treason in their remedy, and usurpation in their character!" Needless to say, Calhoun was angered by the charge. He encouraged Treat of St. Louis to keep up the fight on Benton. He wrote a long address "To the People of the Southern States," which was spread over the South. The South, however, did not need Calhoun to stir it up.

Benton was forced to assume a compromise position in which he advocated the extension of the principle of the Missouri Compromise to the new territory. The whole nation watched the struggle with intense interest.[14] Van Buren fully approved of Benton's course and views in spite of his compromise. The none too sanguine Blair feared the Northern Democracy might not approve of Benton's course on the Wilmot Proviso. Van Buren told him that the New York *Evening Post* and the Albany *Atlas* should set his mind at ease on that score. The North knew at last what could be expected of Benton in a case of necessity on the Oregon question. "We are willing," continued Van Buren, "to permit our friends in other sections to exercise the same latitude

[13] McClure, *op. cit.* [14] C. H. McClure, *History of Missouri* (Chicago, 1920), 89.

of opinion & remark that we think proper to exercise ourselves, a failure on this point has always been the prominent fault of our southern political aspirants. The deleterious influence of the Institution seemed to have rendered them blind to all other interest except their own. I tried hard to beat this out of them but in vain, & thus [they] are at last beginning to reap its fruits. Upon the whole the Col's speech could not have been better [illegible] by the wit of man, & must produce great results." [15]

We are astonished at the "surprising grasp of the situation" which Benton's speeches show that he had in those early days. Thousands of men could not, or would not, understand them. Tens of thousands heard them delivered. They abound with patriotism, ridicule, and sarcasm. But his appeal to patriotism and his withering scorn could not win back the support which had been stolen by the borers from within. He attempted in vain to raise the people above party politics. The Whigs had not forgotten his vituperations many times poured upon them. They would not join him now.

Atchison, Jackson, and Treat met his arguments with their pro-slavery appeals. Frank and Montgomery won the approbation of their friends in their support of their benefactor. Frank was encouraged through his interviews with Whigs and Democrats in behalf of Benton. Both of the younger Blairs wrote for newspapers and addressed their constituents. But the awkward, overgrown state of Missouri was unwieldy. She was, in the words of Professor Shoemaker, in the fifth period of her history. The census of 1840 showed her population at 380,000, and ranked her sixteenth among the states. German and Irish immigrants flocked to the state in the forties and fifties. By 1861 they numbered 88,000 in the entire state, although a majority of them were in St. Louis. Missouri changed from a colony to a colonizer—to the status of a "mother of states." Feverish railroad booms gripped her. Farm lands were rapidly increasing in value. Factories were entering the commonwealth, and her social problems were becoming complex as compared with those of the Missouri which Benton knew. She was rich in resources for farmers, miners, speculators, and rising politicians. Benton was as certain of vic-

[15] Blair MSS. June 16, 1848.

tory in the doubtful new Missouri as Van Buren was of the unification of Hunkers with Barnburners in New York. Both of them encouraged Blair at Silver Spring with their reports. He was jubilant over the coming victory which Benton daily assured him that he would win. Again, Blair proposed to edit a new paper, and again Van Buren dissuaded him. "Of all the acquaintances I made at Washington," he wrote, "there has not been one in whose honor & purity, nor in the sincerity & disinterestedness of whose friendship I had more confidence than I have placed in you. My interest in your welfare & in that of your upright & amiable family is consequently great. . . . Never let the name of Francis P. Blair be again connected with any no-party undertaking."

The meeting of the memorable 31st Congress cut short Benton's state-wide campaign. He closed his greatest campaign flushed with victory and promised to return after Congress met. The outpourings of people appeared far to outweigh the stealthy borings of the enemy, who seemed like pigmies when compared with this veteran of the Senate. They dropped the Jackson resolutions as dangerous doctrines and shifted their line of argument to include the right of the Missouri legislature to instruct the senators of the state.

Benton retaliated to the delight of his friends and convulsed them with laughter at the expense of his enemies. His argument they recognized as unanswerable. Secret wire-pulling and low intrigue characterized much of the policy of the opposition. Newspapers were established by both sides. Old ones changed hands, or were forced to declare for one or the other faction. A contest characteristic of the campaign developed for the control of the St. Louis *Union*. Treat, the editor, spent the winter of 1848-49 in Cuba. He "approved of Calhoun's Address to the Southern People; he claimed that Congress had the right to deal with slavery in the territories, and commended the Jackson resolutions."

Blair denounced Loring Pickering, an associate editor of the *Union,* for being anti-Benton at heart. According to Blair, Pickering's attitude was a result of the influence of D. H. Armstrong, a Calhoun agent, to whom the paper was in debt. Blair was right,

but the editor and Armstrong made a flat denial of the charge. Pickering sold his stock in the *Union* and tried to leave the state, but was sued for debt by Armstrong. Pickering demanded of the Whig *Republican* the name of the author of an article signed by "Radical." It was revealed as Frank Blair. Regardless of Blair's truthful article, Pickering denounced him as a coward, a slanderer, a liar, and an imbecile. Blair immediately challenged him to a duel. Pickering evaded a fair fight by proposing a running fight with bowie knives on the streets of St. Louis. Blair did not purpose to do such an asinine thing, and accordingly refused, but ludicrously enough they fought with umbrellas at a chance meeting on the street. Later, while Blair was leaving the court house at the close of a Democratic primary, Pickering fired three shots at him at a distance of nearly ten feet. The shots went wild, and to Blair's disgust, he got only one shot at Pickering before the latter took to his heels. Blair had his assailant arrested for assault with intent to kill and lost his case. Treat returned to edit the *Union,* but sold his interest to others who pursued a vacillating policy toward Benton.

The final result could not be ascertained until the Missouri assembly met in January of 1850. In a formal pronouncement Atchison's cohorts declared that "measures not men" governed their actions in the contest. They declared that they could not go to Benton, but that the Benton supporters must come to them if they loved the party. They declared that Benton was a political apostate, a reckless, dishonest, unscrupulous, *"wicked, deliberate and wilful liar"* in charging them as conspirators, nullifiers, and knaves. Atchison wrote to a compatriot that "We must keep up the fight without ceasing, every man that can speak, must take the stump, every man who can talk do so, every man who can plan must do it."

Early elections in counties went in Benton's favor. State senators began to announce for him. At the Jackson Day meeting of the Democracy in St. Louis, Montgomery Blair was chosen chairman of the meeting and Frank Blair served as chairman of the committee on resolutions. Resolutions in support of Benton were adopted by a large majority. Such a victory proved to be a hollow one. Overtures were made by the anti-Bentonites to Benton for

some kind of understanding. He repulsed them with scorn. One of the two factions must be defeated, he declared—let the scamps run their ticket. That they did. The Calhounites had abler men in politics than the masses who supported Benton. When the August election arrived the Benton party was in a chaotic state for lack of county and district leaders. Not until near the end of the popular contest did Benton realize that he was in danger of defeat.[16]

Blair at Silver Spring had long ago lost hope for Benton, and turned to observe the sectional contest in Congress.[17] Atchison presented the Jackson-Napton resolutions in the Senate of the United States, where Benton refused to countenance these "speckled progeny of a vile conjunction." Personal and national quarrels were carried to the floor of the Senate where they gave character to one of the greatest sessions ever held by our national body.

3

The fate of the Union hung on the decisions of the Congress of 1849-52. Its personnel was distinctive and impressive. Henry Clay returned to the Senate by a unanimous vote of the legislature of Kentucky after an absence of seven years. His seventy-third year found him mellowed by age, and no longer burning with an insatiable desire to reach the presidency. Rather than to fling bitter epithets across the Senate, he came to pour oil upon the troubled waters of sectionalism. John C. Calhoun sat across the chamber in seat 35. The recently defeated presidential candidate, Lewis Cass, sat not far from the dour South Carolinian. Daniel Webster, the pride of New England and the greatest orator of his day, was a member. The sharp-tongued Tom Corwin was present. A future president of the United States, Andrew Johnson, the future president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, and the ex-president of Texas, Sam Houston, were there. Seven vice-presidents took part in the debates. Four secretaries of war, four secretaries of state, and three secretaries of the treasury were members.

Thirteen Free-Soilers in the House held the balance of power

[16] McClure, *Benton,* ch. 10.
[17] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Dec. 3, 1849.

between 112 Democrats and 105 Whigs. The choice of a speaker for the House and the formation of committees would have been difficult problems without the consideration of slavery. It was impossible at that late day to steer clear of sectional resentments.[18] Nineteen days passed before a speaker could be elected. During the contest passion ran high in the young warmer-blooded Southerners. Fistic encounters and verbal battles made order unknown and the mace disregarded. Toombs of Georgia heatedly exclaimed that he was ready for secession, if the North were to "fix a national degradation on half of the states of the Confederacy" by excluding slavery from California and New Mexican territory. Mr. Baker declared that a dissolution of the government was utterly impossible "so long as an American heart beat in an American bosom." Finally a majority of two votes was reached in favor of Howell Cobb. The Democrats had won after Wilmot withdrew his name, and after an unprecedented effusion of hot words, not to be forgotten until after the nation was to be tried in the crucible of the Civil War.

All sorts of topics of a sectional character were before the House in the form of a bill or a resolution in a few weeks after the President had made his plea for peace. Debate began on the fugitive slave bill introduced by Mason. Seward moved an amendment to it which would provide for the negro a "trial by jury and the benefit of *habeas corpus*." Foote answered Seward in a bitter attack. Chase indicated his desire to speak on the subject, but gave way to Clay, who came forward with a plan to settle all of the "pending issues arising from slavery." It was on January 29 when Clay stepped forward to offer his comprehensive plan. He proposed to admit California as a free state, establish territorial governments in the rest of the Mexican cession without any restrictions on slavery, to determine the boundary between New Mexico and Texas, to abolish the slave trade in the District of Columbia, to pass a more effective slave law, and to acknowledge that Congress had no power to restrict slave trade between the states of the Union. Senators clamored from the floor to protest. Moderate Democrats saw in it no compromise at all. Whigs who

[18] I am indebted to Dr. James A. Barnes for a portion of my information in this chapter. He has made a careful study of the 31st Congress.

claimed the favor of the administration were satisfied with President Taylor's plan. Strong men trembled in terror at the threats of the fire-eaters of the South. Calhoun assured them that one-third of the South was "really solicitous to break up the Union." Amidst flying Southern threats and bravado, the House of Representatives indirectly voted down the Wilmot Proviso to the satisfaction of the Southern Democrats.[19]

Once more Clay gathered his strength to defend his resolutions. He spoke on the fifth and sixth of February, and as he did so, he opened one of the greatest debates in the history of the Senate. He was tired and care-worn from forty-five years of service and from the last great struggle in which he was engaged for the sake of his beloved Union. He was too weak to mount the Capitol steps alone, but his zeal for his cause and the excitement under which he labored led him on and on in his great speech. A throng of men and women pressed into the galleries to hear the voice of the great conciliator. Truly could he say that he was appalled to see in the nation's "twenty-odd legislatures furnaces in full blast, emitting heat and passion and intemperance, and diffusing them throughout the whole extent of this broad land." He could think of nothing more horrible than the severance of the Union by secession—out of which a "bloody, implacable and exterminating" war might bring us a Cæsar to destroy our liberties.

Van Buren had been apprised of Clay's good intentions when the latter visited him in New York. Upon hearing of the great speech, he begged Blair to carry his congratulations to him. "Say for me," he said, "that he added a crowning grace to his public life, by his liberal propositions on the slavery subject, & the able & dignified support of them, which will be more honorable & durable than his election to the Presidency could possibly have been."[20] Blair was delighted with Clay's speech. At last the great Kentuckian had come back to the fold of true statesmanship. Each of these two men, who had been enemies for over twenty years, impulsively clasped hands on the floor of the House and again on the floor of the Senate. Mrs. Blair could not forget and forgive as easily as her husband. She, less influenced by the elec-

[19] McMaster, VIII, ch. 86. [20] Blair MSS., Feb. 9, March 3, 1850.

trified atmosphere at the Capital, refused publicly to take the hand of Clay in friendliness.

Members continued to offer unacceptable plans to Congress. Meetings were held in different places in the South to consider what action should be taken. It was decided to send delegates to a convention to be held in Nashville, Tennessee. The North was aroused to action. "Union Meetings" were held in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore. Rumors spread throughout Washington and the vicinity as to what Calhoun, Webster, and the President would do. Alexander Stephens of Georgia confessed to his friend that he could see no "prospect for future peace." He doubted the possibility of a successful Southern Confederacy. If the South really meant to fight, he wanted her to say so in unmistakable terms.[21] Calhoun had reached the conclusion that the Union as it existed offered no guaranty to Southern liberties. Like Clay, his body was racked with consumption. "He tottered into the Senate and sat wrapped in flannels, his sunken eyes half closed beneath their shaggy brows, the picture of a prophet of doom, while his colleague, Mason, read for him his last direful warning to the North." The Union, he said, was in danger. There was widespread discontent in the South. She could no longer remain with honor and safety in the Union. The South wanted justice. The North must return her fugitive slaves, give her equal rights in our territories, suppress abolition propaganda, and amend the Constitution to restore the old equality between the two sections.

It would be hard to imagine how any speech could have pleased the highly partisan South better. Southern members of Congress ordered as many as ten thousand copies for distribution. It was estimated that over two hundred thousand would be needed to supply the demand. Northerners growled. Some said it was an absurd speech. Then came the third speaker, the greatest orator of the day.

The galleries and the floor of the Senate chamber were filled to overflowing on March 7. The great Webster was to answer Calhoun. Men wondered what he might say in answer to his old antagonist. "His majestic presence was matched by a powerful

[21] Alexander H. Stephens MSS., Library of Congress. Stephens to James Thomas, Feb. 13, 1850.

intellect, persuasion sat upon his lips." Carl Schurz described his speech as one of the sensations of the time. The abolitionists expected a stern reply to Calhoun, but Webster begged both sections to support Clay's proposals and maintain the Union.

The Northern business interests liked Webster's speech. Calhoun congratulated him, and the majority of the Southerners approved of his argument. Over two hundred thousand copies of his speech were printed and circulated at the expense of his friends. Though he claimed to have uttered Wilmot's doctrine, in 1837, he was never an abolitionist, and, therefore, not an apostate, nor was he as Whittier described him,

> So fallen! So lost! the light withdrawn
> Which once he wore!
> The glory from his grey hairs gone
> Forevermore.

Of the three speeches, only Clay's found favor in the eyes of the Blairs. They never liked Webster. A caricature of him hung on the wall of Blair's home at Silver Spring. As for Calhoun, Blair said he was "possuming" after his fourth-of-March speech. Probably he was preparing another speech, said Blair, or writing a constitution for a Southern Confederacy for which he was to be an advanced martyr. While the "Southern Grand Llama [sic]," as Blair scornfully designated Calhoun,[22] was formulating an impossible plan for two executives of the United States, each to have a veto, the Blairs busily circulated a document written by Montgomery and signed by thirty-seven of his Democratic friends in Missouri.[23]

They argued that the only question of slavery in the territories "ought to be, whether it would be wise and beneficial to the people who are to occupy those vast domains in future generations, for those who now hold dominion over them, to prohibit the introduction of domestic slavery there."

The most serious obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the question was the pride of Southern citizens. The strength of the argument that the exclusion of slavery was an insult to the people of the South "lies wholly in the passions to which it is addressed;

[22] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, March 24, 1850.
[23] Pamphlet by M. Blair and others, in Library of Congress.

and, unfortunately those are passions—pride, and jealousy, and ambition—that there is no reasoning with minds so possessed, are reasoned with in vain; seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not. It is no use to tell them of the multitudes of Virginians, Kentuckians and Carolinians, who live in the Northwest Territory." They cannot carry slaves there. "Certainly, if Slaveholders may consider themselves insulted by such a restriction a multitude of our citizens who are restrained from making paper money, selling spirituous liquors, &c., &c., may regard themselves as insulted by our state legislation."

Why did the South object to the limitation of the extension of slavery? For the last fifteen years their "political leaders, with a view to their own elevation, have sought to unite the people of the South under them as leaders," in order to resist attempts which they were taught to believe they were making, or would be made, by the people of the North against them. A few injudicious persons in the North and South had published articles which afforded pretexts for alarming speeches. There never were just foundations for alarm. No one in Congress had offered a bill to affect the status of slavery within the slave states. As a matter of fact, those persons really interested in slavery were insignificant in numbers as compared with the non-slaveholders. Still, like the old Bank of the United States, the slaveholders controlled a government of twenty million people! The Wilmot Proviso was a mere continuance of the policy of Jefferson, Madison, and a multitude of others. Surely those men could compare favorably with the Calhouns, the Butlers, and the Footes of the fifties! The principle of the Northwest Ordinance for the North and West continued unquestioned until Lewis Cass, a presidential candidate hankering for a few votes in the South, precipitated the controversy.

The Blairs and their friends held that Congress had an unquestionable right to govern territories and, by legislation, to admit them as free territory. They fully believed the charge (Blair's and Benton's) that Calhoun raised the slavery issue to help him reach the presidency. If slavocracy were content to defend its rights when slavery was attacked within its legal

bounds, the North could not object, for Congress had no right to change the status of slavery as it existed in the South.

The Blairs and their free-soil friends would tolerate slavery where it existed, but they opposed its extension in new communities. Why? "We cannot understand," they said, "how those who recognize the evils of slavery, who see as we see in the valley of the Mississippi cannot avoid seeing how it retards the growth and prosperity of communities, impairs enterprise and paralyses the industry of a people and impedes the diffusion of knowledge amongst them, to say nothing of the aristocratic tendencies and the degradation which it attaches to labor, can conscientiously consent to imposing it upon any other people. Without considering it in its moral and religious aspects, but viewing it solely as a political question, it seems to us neither honest nor democratic to entail such an institution upon the regions which we now hold in trust for unborn millions."

They would turn to the old South for an example of the evils of slavery. The white non-slaveholding people in those states formed a hopeless and degraded class. Missouri was saved from that deplorable condition by having only a few slaveholders within her boundaries. Now that a few aspiring politicians hoped to drive her headlong into the same condition from which Virginia was suffering, they adopted the policy of the "Democracy of the North, whose spirit is to respect persons and not property, to elevate the masses by referring all questions to them" as the true one for Missourians.[24]

Blair kept a watchful eye on Congress. He was intensely interested in the progress of the bills before Congress. Of this and the participants in Congress, he wrote descriptions and characterizations to Van Buren.[25] Blair saw President Taylor produce a deadlock by refusing to agree to Clay's compromise. William H. Seward aroused the "wrath and excited the contempt of the

[24] This document is signed by Montgomery Blair, S. Gardner, G. F. Filley, F. P. Blair, Jr., O. D. Filley, and others, who took active part in the struggle to save Missouri for the Union at a later day. Its construction and argument bear the marks of the handiwork of the elder Blair and Montgomery. The sentence structure is undoubtedly all Montgomery's. The economic argument belongs, no doubt, to Frank. A similar vein runs through Blair's letter to Montgomery on April 21, 1850.—Blair MSS.

[25] Unfortunately, nearly all of these daily and weekly letters have been destroyed.

friends of the Compromise" when he opposed it on the grounds that California should not come into the Union hampered by compromises with slavery. He believed that a higher law than the Constitution of the United States regulated our authority over the territory. The vast domain was a "common heritage of mankind, bestowed upon" us by God, and we must use it to secure the greatest possible human happiness.[26] Taylor was under Seward's influence, and refused to budge from his position. Threats of secession only made him the more determined. Clay kept in touch with the Van Burenites. Benton and Webster conferred together and agreed on California. On the Compromise bill as a whole, Benton attacked Clay with vigor and venom. The Whig papers in Missouri resented his unnecessary attacks on their venerable statesman, and many of them found common cause against him in the state election which was to spell his downfall. He devoted his entire time to business at Washington while his constituents floundered between Calhounism and Bentonism. The Blairs could do nothing with their stubborn, raging lion. Days dragged themselves out. Blair found Congress a "void" at times, he said,—only the repulsive "old Foote" stalking around and "butting in" wherever possible. Sometimes Benton appeared to be sound asleep at his post.

The deadlock remained unbroken until the sad death of President Taylor, who was succeeded by Vice-President Millard Fillmore, a friend of Clay and in sympathy with his resolutions.

The Compromise bill was separated into parts and each measure was passed alone, the Fugitive Slave Act being passed only after about thirty members absented themselves. The Compromise was, according to Professor Fish, a business man's peace. Professor Muzzey believes it favored the South, and postponed secession for ten years. The failure of the hotspurs further to stir the animosities of the South at the convention held at Nashville to unify Southern opposition was evidence of Southern sanction of the settlement. The Missouri legislature decried the convention at Nashville as "tending to foment discord and alienate one part of the confederation from the other."

There was joy and thankfulness among the masses. News-

[26] McMaster, VIII, 28.

paper headlines announced the good news to their readers in the expressive phrases of: "Most Welcome Intelligence," and "Most Glorious News from Washington." A strong plea had been made to Blair by Buchanan to renew old friendships. Blair had explicitly explained to him why he could not forget all of his grievances against him, but during the trying days in March of 1850, and the weeks following the great debates, he forgot his wrongs and shook hands several times with "Old Buck."

4

Blair fully believed that Clay could defeat Benton at debate and manœuvre in the Senate, but he was confident that Benton would win the popular support of the people. He did not lose hope for the election of Benton to the office of President of the United States until 1852. Blair and Van Buren considered Benton far above any other living man in statesmanship. He seemed to be the only true representative of presidential calibre in their wing of the party. Frank wrote assuringly to his father that Benton would be reëlected to the Senate by a close margin in the state legislature. He had far more confidence in Whig support in the Missouri assembly than did his father.

Benton was one of the finest old warriors that ever sat in the Senate. He was imperious, pugnacious, and overbearing. Probably his dominant characteristic was fearlessness. He championed unpopular issues in the face of the strongest opposition in the Senate and from his constituents. He despised the abolitionists, and at the same time considered slavery an evil. He was physically robust, muscular, and tall. His poise, strong features, courteous bearing in society, and good health made him attractive and popular. He refused to drink when nearly all men did; he was morally clean, generous to a fault, but swore violently when angered. A sterner ruler in the home than he was seldom found. He, nevertheless, loved his family, and played the part of an admirable companion to his children.

The families of Benton and Blair were on the friendliest terms. The two fathers loved each other, and, as far as I am able to learn, never quarreled. Both of them were keen observers and sought knowledge in every direction. Benton was not so great a

reader of books as Blair. They each had large libraries for their day. How they discovered the most minute details of the countless political movements, or of any problem of interest to the country, is almost a mystery. Benton sat like a watch-dog in the Senate; Blair listened to the newsgatherers and read letters and newspapers, whether he was the powerful editor of the *Globe* or the retired citizen of Silver Spring. Their many conversations naturally led them often to a common body of knowledge and understanding.

They were politically incorrupt. Benton ferreted out petty grafts then practiced by Congressmen. Blair took special delight in exposing them to public view. Benton opposed the practice of lobbying, and loathed office-seekers. Blair was not opposed to office-seekers of good character in his own party. Both of them were intensely loyal to the Union. They were proponents of Western development, expansionists, and believers in the theory of "Manifest Destiny." The last work in the Senate for internal improvements which engaged the attention of Benton was the transcontinental railroad which he proposed to run from St. Louis to San Francisco.

Blair possessed infinite tact; Benton had none. He refused to heed the advice of the Blairs to keep in closer touch with the people of Missouri. His lack of personal magnetism, his own vanity, his egotism, his austerity, and his dictatorial attitude cost him that popularity, love, and esteem which could have been his until the day of his death. "The boys" tried to advise him, and he laughed at their fears. No young man could freely advise him except young Frank Blair, the "Lesser Ajax," as Benton called him. Blair, the elder, would have dined and wined the "Fayette Clique"; he would have listened to their crude Western stories, to their trials, and to their advice. But he would have, in turn, smilingly and good-naturedly advised them. He would have shot the deserters after they had refused to eat from his hand.

The more Benton hated and opposed Calhoun and his cohorts, the less influence he exercised in his party. He came to look upon a majority of the Southern leaders as potential rebels. His disdain for their power led him to underestimate the strength of his enemies in Missouri. The results of years of boring from

within the party were most noticeable in the summer state election in Missouri in 1850. It was a triangular contest from which the Benton-Blair faction emerged with only 38 state legislators. The anti-Bentonites had control of 55, and the Whigs 64. The election for senator by the legislature opened with wire-pulling and bitterness. The best efforts of the Hards could not break the organization of the Whigs, nor win any support from the Softs. Enough anti-Bentonites bolted to the Whigs on the fortieth ballot to elect Henry S. Geyer with 80 votes to 55 for Benton.[27] The anti-Bentonites tried to persuade the Whigs to organize a state-rights party before the election. The Whigs curtly refused to do anything of the kind, asserting as they did, that their position on the slavery question in the territories was the same as Benton's. In the choice of Geyer, however, they elected a Whig of extreme Southern views on slavery, and a personal enemy of Benton. A Whig speaker was chosen with definite views against the extension of slavery, and the Jackson resolutions were tabled—an act which the Benton Democrats declared to be a victory for them.

News of the defeat of Benton gave Blair "the blue devils." He tried in vain to convince himself "that it was all for the best," but thoughts of complete vanquishment of the forces of the true Democracy in Missouri kept rising spectre-like in his mind. And when he thought of the disappearance of the true Democracy in Congress his philosophy nearly failed him. In sheer desperation Blair called on Preston King for an hour of laughter. "We laughed at the honest [y] of the chivalry of the South," he wrote Van Buren, "that glories in such fellows, as Tyler, Calhoun, Rhett, &c—honest fellows that never had one honest thought in the course of their lives—Polk too, a worthy example of the modern chivalry came in for his share." [28]

Preston King and Wilmot proposed to Blair to "make Benton the torch bearer" of the Jacksonian Democracy. The movement was to be set in motion through an announcement of their support of him for President, through the support of other bodies of "men who [were] like the old school of reformers," and

[27] Violette, *A History of Missouri,* ch. 12; Lucien Carr, *Missouri A Bone of Contention,* ch. 11; Meigs, *op. cit.,* ch. 21; Gleanings from Blair and Van Buren MSS.; The *Globe.*

[28] Van Buren MSS. Jan. 26, 1851.

through the agitations of the masses at the cross-roads and in legislative halls. The party cry was to be for the reform of the government as in the days of Jackson.

It fell to Blair to interview Benton. The smarting old Roman would hear nothing of his proposed candidacy. He had definitely decided to write "A Memoir of his Times characterizing every man and measure that belongs to them." It would be his legacy and the "basis of his fame." He, like Wright and Mason, cared not for offices, and he "abjured the Presidency." Blair's hopes came down with a thud. He knew that Benton was immovable in his determination. "Old Bullion" then made his proposition. He said it would be useless to attempt to organize the old reform-Democracy. He, therefore, proposed to support Levi Woodbury for President in 1852. His qualifications as a reformer were not satisfactory. But he belonged to the Jackson-Van Buren era, and by a little "warping" he would be made acceptable to the whole party."[29]

Blair was left stranded. Van Buren was no longer eligible. Wright was dead, and Benton refused to run for office. There were other men of the proper hue, but their names were not magnets. For him, Woodbury was a "sad nostrum," although he would take him "rather than be physicked by Cass or Clay or both together." Woodbury was safer than Corwin or "Colo Prides purge," which was the only medicine Scott could administer. After he had thought the matter over he decided "Woodbury would be the best nostrum, upon the homeopathic principle of curing likes by likes—as preventing the small pox, by inoculating for the Kine pox," and so he informed John S. Phelps who interviewed him as to what to do to forestall a Cass movement in Missouri.

Phelps had no "love for Woodbury." He was willing, however, to use him to defeat the followers of Cass, since the use of any other man would not be advisable. Blair thought he appreciated the position of the Missouri reformers. He looked into his "own bosom" and confessed the truth that he was "mortified to find that none of us can see any high open, direct road to immediate triumph." He wrote to Van Buren that all of the parties

[29] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Feb. 7, 1851.

seemed to him to be in a "like bog of despond." Men were floundering in it. Friends had even asked him for permission to make him a candidate for the presidency. Who would have thought "that ever I should arrive at the glory of being thought of for the presidency in New York?" It "argues a poverty in our party, which while it fills me with pride, makes me ashamed." [80]

Actually the Democracy was in chaos. The majority of the leaders of the party looked to the National Democratic Committee to produce a workable organization. They wanted a "National" man who could run on the principle of "The Compromise —a final settlement." There were three groups of leaders, each one of which desired to nominate the man. The Hunker element had Cass, William R. King of Alabama, Douglas of Illinois, Buchanan of Pennsylvania, and Woodbury of New Hampshire. The smaller, but powerful, state-rights men were led by Hunter and Mason of Virginia, Atchison of Missouri, Butler of South Carolina, and others like Rhett, Toombs, and Jefferson Davis. The Free-Soil wing counted among its numbers Benton, the Van Burens, Wilmot, the Blairs, and a number of young men who had not reached prominence in national affairs.

The Hunkers knew that they would invite defeat at the polls in November of 1852, if they permitted the nomination of either a "Southerner" or a strictly free-soil Democrat. They were still laboring under the impression that a party paper was essential to their success. They knew by experience that Ritchie of the *Union* was in sympathy with the South. He had not faced the issue squarely during the great debates on the Compromise, and he was untractable. Allen of Ohio had waited upon him early in the debates to express dissatisfaction with the conduct of the *Union*. Blair said, "Ritchie remonstrated, wept, and at times defied—said he would stand no matter what happened—that he meant not only to maintain his press here during his life, but would leave it to his son as a successor." [81] Dissatisfaction with the venerable editor did not, however, cease.

Ritchie reached his seventy-third year in 1851. He had gone to Washington heavily in debt. His family and the *Union* had been expensive. The only escape appeared to be in aid which he might

[80] Van Buren MSS. Feb. 25, 1851. [81] Quoted by Ambler in *Ritchie*, 276.

get from Congress. The Hunkers saw their chance. A. J. Donelson had just returned from his mission at the court of Prussia. His qualifications fitted him for the editorship of the *Union*. He was Jackson's nephew by marriage, had served Polk in Mexico, was a Tennessee Democrat, and was far from being a fire-eater. His financial objections to the venture were waived. The party would see that an acceptable partner furnished the money with which to buy the organ, and, furthermore, it would give him the lucrative census contract. The estimated profits would run to a hundred thousand dollars. As they needed a man to conduct the finances of the paper, they approached John C. Rives who curtly refused to have anything to do with such jobbery. Blair was approached by the liberals to set up an independent organ, and he again refused to enter the field. They finally decided upon another favorite of the "Old Hero," Major R. J. Armstrong of Tennessee, to supply the capital. "Strutting Foote" then informed Ritchie that he could expect no financial relief from Congress. The poor old honest editor was forced to sue for $20,000 and to sell his paper. Thus a second editor was forced into retirement at the hands of Polk-Hunkerdom.

The new editor was instructed to treat the Compromise as a finality. The radicals were to be mollified. Jacksonian Democracy was to be offered to them in coated pills. The old stirring slogan of "Everything for principles, nothing for men" was revived. Donelson was to have remained neutral, but his predilections for Cass led him into deep water. Armstrong's son-in-law lobbied about Congress for steamboat companies, and thus cast a shadow over the *Union*. The Atchison-Hunter clique disliked Donelson, and refused to aid him in Congress. The *Union* could not succeed financially without the favor of Congress. Donelson withdrew from active work on the *Union* before the national convention met in Baltimore. Thus a third editor, persuaded and whillied into the acceptance of his party-editorship, was virtually dropped by his party.

Meanwhile the Blairs suffered another loss. The question of presidential candidates lay next to their hearts. The family, the party, and the nation were vitally concerned. Blair had been in the business of president-making too long to pry himself loose

from the ranks. He was now as tenaciously a free-soil advocate as he was a Unionist. Some man must be chosen for the presidency who would recognize that slavery should extend no farther. No better picture of his plans may be drawn than is seen in his letter to John Van Buren in the spring of 1851:[32]

> The great point with us is to have Hunkerdom swallowed up, & I assure you that nothing has tended so much to reconcile me to the nomination of Woodbury, as the expectation, that he of all others the least obnoxious man to Cass—Buchanan, Marcy, & the leaders of their classes, is most likely to absorb their rank & file & bring them into the mass of the old Democracy, whose true chiefs must command him. . . . Woodbury having been on the bench & quiet while this revolution in power worked its way, cannot stand in the way of shots of those who would wish to assail the candidate of the free soil party as disunion breeders— [He opposed the extension of slavery in spirit]— His southern aspect during Calhoun's time will enable him to draw all the Democrats in the South who can now venture to go for a Northern man to his side—& this must make him stronger in the North than any other we could start— [Wm. O.] Butler & Houston (both of whom I like better than W—) being the one for Texas Annexation, the opposition to which originated in our party—& the other a bottle holder to Cass—which brings up its antipathy of the last contest, unfits them for our purpose— As for Buchanan he is worse than Cass; and Scott or Clay is preferable to either of them— It is better to fight corruption & extravagance under Whig rule than under that calling itself democratic & elected by Democratic votes. . . . So I have really argued myself at last into the belief that Woodbury is the best man to start against Hunkerdom—the best to start against the Whigs—the man it is possible for us to elect—and the best man to be beaten if we cannot elect any one— We certainly shall beat the Hunkers with him—& we can certainly relieve Benton with him as our candidate in Missouri & these are good results if nothing more comes of it——

Woodbury's name would have undoubtedly united the Missouri Democracy for the time being. The two Blair sons were doubly interested. Benton might regain his prestige; Montgomery would have the pleasure of seeing his father-in-law, for whom he had great respect, elevated to the position of head of his party; and Frank wished to ride upon the Woodbury wave into the Missouri legislature. Benton felt positive that Woodbury, if he were nominated, could be easily elected. As for Buchanan

[32] Van Buren MSS. Mar. 24.

or Cass, he said, "you might as well think of starting Methusalem." They must have a man who would cut the throat of "Whiggery," which he was certain would be headed by General Scott.[33]

Blair won the elder Van Buren to the acceptance of either Benton or Woodbury and got a reluctant promise from John not to oppose the nomination of Woodbury.

The Woodbury boom was quite well under way when Woodbury suddenly died on September 4. He had been familiarly known as the "rock of New England." Honest, intellectual, just, an expansionist at heart, he was fully entitled to the verdict of the Boston *Post:* "The country has lost one of the most worthy, able, and eminent of its sons." Blair told John Van Buren that he would now release him from the pledge into which he had entrapped him. He, furthermore, promised him that he would support "any man you may select, *provided you can induce your father to support him.*"

After a brief sounding of opinion on General Houston as a possibility, Blair then suggested the brave old soldier, William O. Butler, of Kentucky. Why would he not make a strong candidate? The Van Buren men had not forgotten how Butler was "tricked out of first place" by Polk's aides at Baltimore in 1848. He had been before the country as the running mate of Cass. "The dull, trusting and honest Kentuckian" satisfied the needs of Benton and Blair. The latter wrote a biographical sketch of General Butler. It was attractively and vividly written in Blair's easy descriptive style. Butler, he said, had a deep affection for his early associates. The memories of boyhood days in "the romantic dells and woodland heights of Kentucky" near the "far-spreading, gently flowing, beautiful Ohio" gave these two Kentuckians a common bond.[34]

The choice of Butler promised to be the most fortunate one for the Blair-Benton group. Butler was tractable, ignorant of politics, and honest in his good-natured simplicity. He promised Blair to make no commitments which might compromise him as General Taylor had done in 1848. His freedom from politics

[33] Blair MSS., Benton to M. Blair, Aug. 29, 1851.
[34] Francis P. Blair, (Sr.), Biographical Sketch of *General William O. Butler* (Washington, 1848).

and his unquestionable character saved his name from taunts at the hands of the many enemies of his friends.

The New England Democracy showed a fair willingness to support Butler. It proposed Franklin Pierce as a candidate for vice-president to run with Butler, and had begun to be active when developments in Kentucky ruined Butler's chances. Blair had found the Kentuckians somewhat reluctant to support the candidacy of the old general. He finally persuaded his cousin, John C. Breckinridge, member of Congress, and Governor Powell to espouse Butler's candidacy. An innocent deal had been made with Marcy and Hamlin for their support and John Van Buren was playing a careful hand in New York. Prospects were very bright when the Kentucky Democracy met in a convention on January 8.

Butler's opponents charged him with being in sympathy with rank free-soilism, and cited the support of the Blairs and Van Buren as proof of their contentions. It was, they said, a plot concocted by those politicians to reënter the national government. Blair's innocent and friendly visit to Lindenwald, the Blair-Van Buren fishing trip to the St. Lawrence River, and Blair's accidental meeting of Butler on the Ohio River were incidents used to color the dark and sinister proceedings of the artful politicians. The friends of Cass controlled the convention. After hearing all of the true or false charges, they endorsed Butler and the principles of Cass. Butler's friendship for Cass and his desire to be rid of the charge of free-soilism led him to approve the principle that Congress was powerless to prohibit a master from carrying his slaves with him into any of the territories of the United States.

Blair was noticeably disconcerted, but he and Preston King were disposed to squint at Butler's approval of the Cass platform as a bit of expediency. The Northern Democracy was visibly shocked. Disparaging remarks were made in Congress charging that he was to be used by "Van Buren and Company." The *Democratic Review,* which had been noted for its soundness in the ways of the Democracy, suddenly broke out in a series of tirades against the experienced Democratic war-horses. It branded Butler as a "bottleholder" and a "no-policy" candidate. Van

Buren wrote Blair that he would not "become excited in any direction, as to take an active part in the matter." Blair attempted to explain away the resolutions in a series of letters, but he found it too late to save his candidate. Free-Soilers withdrew their support, and the General's boom exploded in a light puff.

Blair was so disgusted that he thought he was through with president-making. Douglas begged him for his support after Butler was politically dead. He informed the "Little Giant" that "Blair-support" would kill anybody. "I've got a strong constitution," replied Douglas; "I can stand anything."

Douglas was one of four or five prominent contestants for the nomination. He was young, buoyant, and aggressive. He, at the age of thirty-eight, threw his hat in the ring with men approximately sixty, veterans in the service. He was over-confident, a speculator in Western lands and railroads, and willing to accept any kind of support from any source. His name appealed to lobbyists; the thugs of New York City were welcomed; he joined Tammany; and he straddled any issue to win votes.

This new herald in politics spoke at institutes, dinners, and agricultural fairs—anywhere to meet people. "Born politician, boon companion, hail fellow well met, all who saw him were charmed by his manner, and those undazzled by the glamour of his personality were thrilled by pledges of future office and spoil. Promises were lavish." Whether he was in Kentucky, in his adopted state of Illinois, in Maryland, or in New York, it was ever the same. He played fast and carelessly.

Douglas, nevertheless, appealed to the young Americans. The country was in the middle of a period of rapid expansion and change. "Old Fogyism" was, among the youth, a term of reproach. New inventions, new lands, mounting urban populations, and an increasing foreign population composed of political refugees from revolutionary Europe broadened our views, upset society, and produced a state of unrest until the outbreak of the Civil War. Spread-eagle speeches caught the ear of the republicans, and to that crowd Douglas made speeches that brought forth shouts of approval. With few exceptions, the prominent leaders in the Democracy remained chary of supporting him. Blair pronounced him and his probable running mate (R. M. T.

Hunter) "two little nuts of politicians." [85] Benton's opinion of Douglas probably remained unchanged from that expressed in the St. Louis Pacific Railroad Convention in 1849. The charge was made that Douglas wanted the road built from Chicago westward as a political step toward the presidency. Benton replied, "Douglas never can be President, sir. No, sir; Douglas never can be President, sir. His legs are too short, sir. His coat, like a cow's tail, hangs too near the ground, sir."

Of all the candidates, Senator Cass was foremost in the eyes of the rank and file. His warmest friends regarded him as the martyr of 1848. They found it very difficult to forgive Van Buren and his free-soil following. Cass was a rugged old man with a hatred for England. This he acquired in the Northwest Territory, where our struggle with the British for a boundary settlement warped the judgment of many of our loyal citizens. He was never a good campaigner. Now at the age of sixty-nine, his stout, sluggish body, "topped by an ill-fitting wig," and his lack of ability for speaking seriously handicapped him. He was genuinely a democrat and a Democrat who candidly endorsed Blair's old slogan that the "world is governed too much." Revenge was foreign to his heart; consequently, he had no desire to avenge himself of his defeat four years earlier. He realized that his day had passed and resigned himself to his fate. If the party wanted him, he was willing; otherwise he did not care to suffer his "equanimity to be disturbed" by setting his "mind too much on the result."

Cass enjoyed strong active support in New York, where his Hunker supporters vied with the Barnburners for ascendancy.

The Barnburners whispered alluring promises to Marcy. He was at first shy of them. He knew that soothsayers often had hidden purposes. He knew also that his old cynical slogan of "to the victors belong the spoils" could not be realized without party harmony. He regarded Cass as a friend and he feared John Van Buren. With all of his rare mental resources, his "consummate capacity in undermining friends," and his intuitive sagacity, he, nevertheless, succumbed to the allurements which the Barnburners held before him.

[85] Nichols, *op. cit.*, ch. 7; Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Mar. 24, 1851.

Thirty-five years of Marcy's life (he was then at the age of sixty-five) had been spent in public view. A man was ignorant of politics if he did not know him. He was entitled to be known as the "most statesmanlike of the Democratic politicians." He was as shrewd as Van Buren, clearer-headed than Blair, keener than Cass, and far more politic than Douglas. Cass rode astride the slavery issue, Marcy possessed no moral scruples on the subject. He wanted the return of the Barnburners, and they wanted a man who might draw off a faction of the Hunkers. Buchanan commented on the situation thus: "He is shrewd, & it will be diamond cut diamond."

The fourth prominent bidder for the nomination was James Buchanan. Friends called him the "Sage of Wheatland"; Blair and Van Buren gave him the plain appellation of "Old Buck"; and his followers were termed "Buchaneers." He was disgusted with Marcy's bid for the presidency. "It appears to me," he wrote, "that the wisest & most sagacious men become dunces when seized by a desire for the Presidency." It may be remembered that Buchanan had sought it for ten years.[86]

He knew that his sixty years of life were a warning that his apprenticeship should not continue much longer. His active campaign for the highest office lasted from 1848 until 1856. This counsellor of Solomon would now become king. He plied his pen incessantly in his own behalf. A rather large number of his friendships had been formed during his public career as a senator, as a minister to Russia, and as Secretary of State under President Polk. Thanks to his letter of 1847, in which he opposed the Wilmot Proviso, he now successfully appealed to the South where Cass was unacceptable. He favored a strict fugitive-slave law, a low tariff, and he had followed a cowardly but politic course of silence on the Compromise of 1850. Nothing in politics could have pleased him better than to have kept slavery out of it. Strenuous efforts on the part of all of his friends had resulted in the acquisition of the support of Pennsylvania, and the probable support of five other states when all the delegates gathered in Baltimore.

[86] John Bassett Moore, *The Works of James Buchanan Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1908), VIII, 425-28.

Meantime an availability campaign was in progress. The busy Edmund Burke of New Hampshire interviewed men in person and by letter, begging for the support of young Franklin Pierce, if none other could be nominated. Pierce, for personal reasons, reluctantly and hesitatingly permitted the use of his name as a harmony producer. But his plans, which were perfected only before the convention was convened, were to have his friends vote for Cass, or Buchanan, or Douglas, until it was evident that they could not secure the necessary two-thirds majority. His support came mainly from his home state, Massachusetts, where Caleb Cushing directed his pre-campaign, and from parts of the South. In the latter region lived General Pillow, who held a lasting grudge against General Scott as a result of charges preferred against him at a court-martial by the doughty old general. Pillow interested A. V. Brown, arch-conniver, in the interest of Pierce. Burke persuaded an old newspaper correspondent by the name of Francis J. Grund to write letters to the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Philadelphia Ledger,* setting forth the availability of Pierce. After jockeying with the supporters of various other candidates, these dark-horse advocates marched down to Baltimore, where the convention opened at twelve o'clock noon on June 1, 1852.

Delegates were passing through Washington two weeks before the day for the convention to open. Blair found the city in a buzz with delegates which the different managers were attempting to hive. It was like a bazaar or a race-course where a dozen entries include "all the old nags to start." [87] The citizens of Baltimore gave the horde of enthusiastic Democrats a royal reception. Wire-pulling was resorted to alike by "Old Fogies" and "Young America." The latter were determined to replace the "Rottens," and the outworn candidates with younger blood—Stephen A. Douglas.

The excitement in the Capital was running high by Tuesday, June 1. Congress adjourned to permit the Democratic Congressmen to attend the convention. A large number of Washingtonians attended the convention. Unprecedentedly large state delegations arrived. The legislature of Maryland turned out to a man. The managers had arranged to seat 5,000 persons in the

[87] Blair to John A. Dix, May 24, 1852, in Dix, *Dix,* I, 267-68.

Hall of the Maryland Institute, where the meetings were to be held. A raised platform had been prepared for the usual number of delegates. The excessive number, however, threw the convention in confusion when it first convened. B. F. Hallet called the weltering mass of individuals to order at twelve o'clock. Thereafter the political pot boiled, and the roaring mob refused time after time to recognize the "order of gentlemen." John W. Davis of Indiana was chosen permanent chairman. He was an efficient man of firm demeanor, but he broke down in the endurance test and gave way to another.

Correspondents had informed their editors on Sunday and Monday that sentiment seemed to be for Cass and "Old Buck." Douglas men refused to indicate disappointment. They were the loudest and most enthusiastic of the omnipresent wire-pullers. All of the parties felt "that the price of the nomination was eternal vigilance as well as victuals and drink and other little appliances." Excited men, cool men, drunk men, and sober men ran from headquarters to headquarters, from a bar to a street corner where politicians harangued the crowds, from these places to the Hall, and back again. Cass had no headquarters; the Marcy men were comfortably located in the Eutaw House; Senator Dickinson had rooms at Barnum's Hotel, where the Cass men were welcomed; and the "Buchaneers" paid dearly for the comfortable and spacious Caroll Hall. They surpassed all the others in the dispensation of drink to the thirsty and food to the hungry. Champagne, brandy, and other liquors adorned their side-boards, and game, and "all the delicacies of the season" loaded the tables for those who would join the colors of "The Sage of Wheatland."

The first and second days ended with no ballot taken for a nominee. Organization, reports, and harangues consumed the time. The Chairman assured the Democracy that their delegates stood for "principles not men." Then they proceeded to dispose of a resolution to adopt the two-thirds rule. It passed, with slight dissent from New York and Ohio, amidst the wildest of huzzas. The war-whoop of Smith Van Buren resounded from wall to wall when he heard the result. He knew that his father's old enemies (Cass and Buchanan) would suffer, if they had to reach the high mark of 197 votes to be elected. A resolution to endorse

a stricter Fugitive Slave Act passed as a soothing measure for the state-rights men. After the appointment of a platform committee a motion was offered to adopt the principles of the party before nominations were made. Here was a boon to "Old Buck" if it passed. He stood solidly with the South. But the Cass, Douglas, and Marcy delegates defeated the motion and with it the slogan, "Everything for principles, nothing for men."

By the end of the second day blatant patriotism ran high, and liquor flowed abundantly. Politicians of Washington hurried to and fro between the two cities. Slippery Simon Cameron glided here and there cutting at his deadly enemy, "Old Buck," wherever possible. Politic Edmund Burke acted as chairman of the Committee on Credentials and also kept the name of Pierce before the delegations as a possible dark-horse. Free-soil Blair visited from post to post, perfectly at ease. He had not lost all hope for Butler, and he determined to undermine Cass and Buchanan if possible. He kept Van Buren at Lindenwald informed of every important movement during the convention. His son, Montgomery, who had been chosen as a Butler man, but who was instructed for Cass, was a delegate from Missouri. The convention made overtures to the Blairs and Benton by placing Montgomery on the Committee on Nominations.

Cass and Buchanan held their own on the first ballots on the third day. "Young America" looked glum. The "Old Fogies" boasted of their strength while the multitude broke seats, bellowed approval, and swore at their failure to stampede the convention to Douglas. Balloting continued in a see-saw of strength. The number of delegates voting for Cass finally reached 131 on the thirty-fifth ballot. Douglas began with 20 (beginning with those from Illinois and a majority of those from Florida) and rose to 91 on the twenty-ninth ballot. Buchanan had 95 in the beginning, but his strength was in the South, where no more appreciable gains could be made. The forty-eighth ballot found Marcy with 90, but he was too stubborn to trade with "Old Buck" and Cass and, consequently, dragged the four horsemen down together. It was on the thirty-fifth ballot that Virginia changed her vote to Pierce. Men had come to despair of reaching a compromise on any of the prominent candidates. Cass had politically killed

himself in the South by his firm support of the Compromise of 1850. Buchanan did not have enough support in the North. Marcy was tainted with his conjunction with the Barnburners. And Douglas did not have the organization and solid support of a large region. Butler men turned to Pierce. Whole states began to leave their favorites, and on the forty-ninth trial, the chairman announced that Franklin Pierce had "282 votes, God bless him." His friends had adroitly carried their plans to a successful end. The wildest enthusiasm burst forth from the five-day-old convention for the compromise candidate.

"We have had the greatest triumph ever achieved by us over the jobbers in the nomination of Frank Pierce," Blair immediately wrote to Van Buren. He was gratified beyond measure that a corrupt and packed convention should choose an honest man. It was undoubtedly the result of neutralized forces. "I never saw such manifest joy (& sorrow too) among a mass of disappointed men," he continued, "when they found their schemes for separate & distinct interests from the iniquity & their consequences purged & redeemed—The Douglas Men—the Cass men—the Buchaneers are gloriously happy in having whipped each other—& our friend Dickinson shouts from the housetops, his delight in having strangled his dear friend Marcy. . . . Tell John here is a deliverer & he must make much of him." [38]

"Who is Pierce?" came from the lips of men in the South and West. He was "a good nomination," said Cass; "an excellent nomination," said Houston; and "I congratulate the Democratic Party," said Douglas. "Young America" agreed and rejoiced in their victory. He was a Major-General who got his arm injured in the Mexican War, the *Indiana Republican* modestly confessed. He is a wine-bibber, some of the well-informed said. Greeley pronounced him a man of "sufficient ability to make a respectable President after the pattern of Van Buren or Polk." [39]

Frank Pierce was the son of a revolutionary hero. The father, Benjamin Pierce, was reputed to have done much to keep New Hampshire from joining the Federalists in the notorious Hartford Convention. He was of a "black-mouthed, stiff-necked, indomi-

[38] Van Buren MSS., Blair to Van Buren, June 5, 1852.
[39] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, June 8.

table, and earnest northern Scotch-Irish blood to which America" owed "heroes like Montgomery and Stark, and iron men of the Jackson and Calhoun breed." Frank grew up with a distaste for Federalism and Whiggery. He lived in the home of Peter Woodbury [40] during his student days at the Academy of Francestown. He was handsome, sympathetic, and cordial. His father's good name and his connections carried him into politics where his pleasing personality made him many steadfast friends. The people of New Hampshire conferred many gifts upon him.

His friendship with Levi Woodbury was a profitable schooling for him. He became as tactful as his political preceptor. He persisted in his determination to make no commitments on the Compromise of 1850 to the day of his nomination. He was, next to Douglas, the choice of "Young America," but he was a Hunker whom the Blairs were willing to support in the hope that his silence meant that he would be opposed to the extension of slavery. It was generally thought that he was not a fogy in principle, and still would be a guaranty to the South that she should have no fear of her state-rights."[41]

Van Buren was pleased with the nomination. "You did well, extremely well," he wrote to Blair, "& the result will be the restoration of the guidance of the party to honest leaders. Our Hunkers are evidently not at their ease. . . . Our friends will try hard to give the State to Pierce . . . Webster or Filmore they can beat easily. With Scott it will be a hard fight." [42]

The Whig National Convention held its first session on June 16 in the very hall which the Democrats had vacated ten days earlier. Clay was old and had one foot in the grave. He was necessarily out of the contest. Three prominent candidates were left to fight for the nomination; namely, Webster, Fillmore, and Scott. Intriguers danced on the political stage to the "blare of partisan bands." Southern Whigs tried to tie the hands of the convention by presenting their own platform with Webster's endorsement, with the threat that if it were not accepted the whole South and the Webster delegates would bolt the party and

[40] Father of Levi Woodbury. Peter and Benjamin were old friends. Young Pierce was a favorite in the Woodbury home.
[41] *The Daily Courier*, July 15.
[42] Blair MSS. June, 16.

hold another convention. The dictum of the Southern Whigs was, in general, the finality of the Compromise of the 32nd Congress. The platform adopted raised no issue with that of the Democrats. Balloting continued until General Scott received twelve more than a majority to elect on the fifty-third trial.

Harmony within the ranks was not attained by the nomination of the gallant old soldier. The blow was a heavy one for Webster. His friends had spent money, time, and effort for him. He was visibly chagrined at the desertion of his Southern allies at the crucial moment. His great Seventh of March speech had been lost upon them. He so long had aspired to be President that at last his sense of humor faded into bitterness, and upon receiving the news he cried, all is "vanity, vanity, all is vanity." [43] Some partisans received the nomination with joy. Some men objected to the platform and not to the candidate. Revolts which began at once against Scott foretold an inevitable defeat. Southern Whigs in great numbers deserted his ranks, charging him with being the choice of the Free-Soilers. The North disliked the platform because of its Southern tone. Amidst these disheartening reports came the sad news of the death of Clay, "The Great Pacificator." In August, the widow of President Taylor died. In July, Webster received a greater ovation than any other man on the Boston Common. His fellow townsmen and third parties, however, could not drive away that sickness of heart which resulted from his defeat at Baltimore. Broken in health, he died on October 24. The Whig party with the nomination of a Southern man, who had fought and bled for the North and South alike, went to its dissolution.

Immense ratification meetings were held by the Democrats while the state elections during September and October went steadily in their favor. John Slidell, a "Buchaneer," probably expressed the opinion of many Union Democrats when he said that he would support Pierce without any enthusiasm." [44]

Speeches were made by the defeated nominees. Douglas "went the whole hog for the Baltimore Platform, especially its

[43] Henry Cabot Lodge, *Daniel Webster* (Boston, 1899), 337.
[44] Louis Martin Sears, *John Slidell* (Durham, 1925), 93.

Slave-hunting aspects, accusing the Whig party of arraying one section against another." He continued his spread-eagleism on American foreign policy.[45] Appeals were made to the German and Irish voters. Copies of the *Life of Pierce* were scattered far and wide. The Jackson Democratic Association and its branches worked effectively in stirring up party interest and maintaining party harmony.

There was no campaign issue of lasting quality. It soon descended to scurrilous attacks upon the candidates. Pierce was wrongly accused of being anti-Catholic [46] and of being a drunkard of the worst kind. Like many another Congressman of the thirties and forties he was addicted to drink at Washington. Mrs. Pierce shuddered at the thought of returning to that place of riotous living, and when Pierce was notified of his nomination, she fainted. What rich stories these were for campaign whisperers! But other charges against Pierce, including abolitionism, a negative record in Congress, and that of being an aristocrat, were freely made. Unfortunate scurrilous pamphlets and speeches were extensively used. Blair retaliated by unearthing the history of General Scott and presenting it in an injurious pamphlet entitled a *Memoir of General Scott from Records Contemporaneous with the Events.*

Thus the campaign passed with slight defections in Democratic ranks. The election in November was a rout for old "Fuss and Feathers," as Scott was called by the Democrats. Four states gave him 42 electoral votes. The mediocre Pierce turned a somersault into the White House with 254 votes in the electoral college. "We have fallen upon great times for little men," observed Horace Greeley.

Out in Missouri Benton nominated himself for Congress for the First Missouri District and won the race. He defeated his Soft competitor by nearly 6,000 votes and his Whig opponent by about 600 votes. The campaign was characterized by an overflow of "language of vituperation, abuse, and denunciation." Frank Blair ran for the state legislature. He was now the party orator in Missouri. He had the distinction of being the only man on the

[45] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* June 14, 1852.
[46] *The Daily Courier,* June 11, 1852.

Free-Soil ticket elected to the legislature that year.[47] The Missouri campaign was conducted on the issue of the "Jackson Resolutions," or Benton vs. anti-Benton. Both Democratic factions united on General Sterling Price and elected him governor, but they carried their animosities to the extreme in the election of a state legislature.

The Whig party had outlived its usefulness. It was gone. With it trailed the Barnburners who were absorbed by the great Democratic party. They had, nevertheless, furnished the oncoming Republicans with an issue and prepared for them practical leaders.

[47] Augustus C. Rogers, *Sketches of Representative Men, North and South* (New York, 1874), 69.

CHAPTER XX

Fallen Years

There is a dangerously prevalent notion that consistency and honesty are synonymous. There is nothing moral in consistency or immoral in inconsistency. The one important meaning of consistency is loyalty to facts. If the facts change, we are morally obliged to change with them; and there is nothing inconsistent in so doing.—Glenn Frank.

I

It was assumed by the Free-Soilers, without good reasons, that, if elected, Pierce would favor them in appointments to office. The Union Democrats, the supporters of Cass, the "Buchaneers," and the state-rights men believed that they would have ample recognition; each group expected to control the administration. Young America had no doubt of its future representation in the Cabinet when it marched to the polls on November 2 to vote for a forty-eight year old Yankee. Pierce unfortunately attempted to treat all the hungry office-seekers alike. He expected to conciliate all factions by the distribution of offices. The representative delegations, therefore, received warm greetings from the President-elect, and each faction went away in the belief that it would obtain more favors than he could possibly grant.

The Blairs had labored diligently for the election of Pierce. The father had worked with the Eastern liberals while his sons in Missouri gave valuable support to the national ticket. The elder Blair was then twenty years older than he, as a youth, believed he could live. His uncertain health had kept him in a receptive mood for death since he was forty years old. His country seat was beautiful and unique in its comforts. The old couple walked beneath the stately chestnuts, or rested at the "Acorn" to drink the cool, refreshing waters of Silver Spring, and talked of the absent sons. Montgomery had been in Missouri for a decade.

His practice and speculations in property of rapidly rising values had given him a competence. His wife's people lived far away in New Hampshire, where it was difficult to visit them. Why should not Montgomery be brought to Washington to follow the practice of law, or live at Silver Spring, where a house could be built on the hillock a half-mile away? Or, better still, an appointment in the Cabinet would be appropriate.

There were other reasons why Montgomery should be given a place in Pierce's Cabinet. And so the father sat down to make out a list of them the day before he and Mrs. Blair were to go north to meet Montgomery and his family. He sent the list in a friendly letter to John C. Rives. The proprietor of the official *Globe,* he reasoned, had remained an orthodox Democrat since 1845. His advice would be heeded by the friends of Mr. Pierce. Was it within the bounds of propriety for him to suggest Montgomery for the post of Attorney-General? "A father ought not to trust himself, to determine any point involving the reputation of a son, as dear as is mine to me," he wrote. What would comport with his honor and the success of General Pierce, for whom he preferred success rather than his "own little interests"? Rives could measure Montgomery. He must decide it. These were the reasons which favored the suggestion of Montgomery's name to General Pierce. First, he was a capable, sound, and able lawyer who had distinguished himself in the discharge of his duties as United States District Attorney in Missouri, and as presiding Judge in the Court of Common Pleas in St. Louis. Secondly, his personal character was without a blemish. His morals were religiously pure, his habits disciplined, and his temper was amiable. Thirdly, his "political attitude" was especially important. Jackson loved him as a son; Wright had watched his progress with "anxiety and pleasure"; Van Buren and his friends would be pleased; he was Benton's lieutenant, Woodbury's son-in-law, and the Jackson party everywhere would approve of the appointment as a recompense for the ill treatment which Polk had meted out to the Blairs in 1845. Fourthly, Montgomery had not been in Congress and was therefore not a victim of the political prejudices of the past four years. He had occupied "exactly the place" which

had been General Pierce's in regard to the free-soil schism.[1] Montgomery was "opposed to the extension of slavery, but did not approve of this schism in the party produced by a separate platform. In this you know he [differed] from Frank & myself, & I think [he] was wrong as events show that all has turned out for the best."[2]

I do not know what Rives did for Montgomery. Perhaps he interviewed the President-elect. Rives and the Blairs were on the best of terms, regardless of their differences in political opinion. Pierce found Montgomery only one of a host of suggested appointments. He wanted Dix, his boyhood playmate, for a principal office in the Cabinet. Free-Soil taint, however, made Dix unacceptable to his enemies. They pressed the claims of Marcy, or of Dickinson—depending on the faction. Pierce sounded Blair on the wishes of his friends. The latter urged Dix for Secretary of State, R. M. T. Hunter for Secretary of the Treasury, and Charles H. Peaslee for Postmaster-General. His suggestions were apparently welcomed by Pierce. He consulted Buchanan, the Cass men, and the ultra-Southerners. Each opposing faction in each state or section expected support to the detriment of the other. "The Sage of Lindenwald" wrote a letter for Blair to sign and send to the President-elect, instructing him to avoid the appointment of any potential presidential candidate.[3] Pierce's effort to reach the desired millennium drove him almost to distraction.

The horde of wire-pullers and office-seekers and the large number of conflicting rumors of certain appointments, confused even the veteran Blair. His opinions of the ability and availability of many men were sought by Pierce or by Blair's friends. He finally advised the appointment of James Guthrie of Kentucky for Secretary of the Treasury, although he could not forgive Guthrie for his opposition to General Wm. O. Butler for President. Benton decided to "bring up Montgomery to represent Missouri" in the law department. Montgomery was strongly endorsed by the secretary of state for Missouri and other promi-

[1] Blair was wrong in this belief. Pierce was not a free-soil advocate.
[2] Blair-Rives MSS. Nov. 6, 1852.
[3] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Dec. 18, 27, 1852.

nent Democrats.[4] It would increase the prestige of the Blairs and help Benton to regain his former power in Missouri. Blair was naturally gratified, but he promised to withdraw the claims of his son if John Van Buren wanted the place. He wrote to John about the matter, and asked him, if he were not an applicant, to endorse Montgomery for Attorney-General. The elder Van Buren assured Blair that nothing could please him more than the elevation of Montgomery to the Cabinet, but he said "you should preserve the distinterested position" you now occupy. "Let it therefore be exclusively a Missouri movement & managed in the main by the Col [Benton]."[5]

Pierce continued to interview and to be interviewed for Cabinet positions. The population of Washington began to swell. The public plunder, worth the round sum of fifty millions, was attracting hungry Democrats. The principle that any man was good enough for office had risen from Jackson's tomb to stalk like a ghost through the land at a time when principles were as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Blair fretted at the delay. He began to suspect Pierce of overtures to too many state-rights men. "Keep cool," advised Van Buren. Wait to see what he will do.[6] Blair followed that timely advice for almost two months. Meantime, Pierce had practically decided on the members of his Cabinet. He had left his home at Concord on February 14, a careworn and nervous man. The strain was already sapping his strength. He passed through Philadelphia on his way to secure the consent of a "Buchaneer" to enter his Cabinet. Marcy of New York, James Guthrie of Kentucky, James C. Dobbin of North Carolina, and Robert McClelland of Michigan, had been selected for members of the Cabinet, and were waiting for the President-elect when he arrived in Washington on February 21. The unpopular and able Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts, and the fire-eater and martinet, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, were soon added to the official family.

Pierce called for Blair the next day after he arrived in Washington. When the old editor presented himself at the President's

[4] Document in Blair MSS.

[5] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, n. d.; Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren. Dec. 18, 1852; Blair to John Van Buren, Dec. 19, 1852.

[6] Blair MSS. Dec. 31, 1852.

rooms he received a cordial greeting. It was explained to Blair that according to a mutual understanding General Dix was to receive no appointment in the Cabinet. He was assured that no public measure would be recommended which Benton, for whom Pierce expressed the highest esteem, would not support. Appointments in Missouri were not to include Benton's vindictive enemies. Blair was called back after he had taken his leave to be informed that he would be consulted about appointments in the District of Columbia. On February 23, the newly chosen Secretary of the Navy invited Blair to visit the steamboat, *Ericson,* with Pierce and Fillmore, where a dinner was spread for the outgoing naval officers and a "few select guests." The new President went out of his way to speak kindly of Blair to his friends and Congressmen. Truly, this was high honor to be paid to the retired patriarch at Silver Spring. Such treatment would have caused the cup of thousands of men to run over. Blair, however, was disgruntled. And so he wrote:[7]

> . . . In fact I am cut to the very soul, & I told General Pierce in an open hearted talk the cause of my grief— I told him that he had put in his Cabinet his enemies—men who felt his nomination as a blow to their ambition & who certainly [would] avenge it on him unless he complied with their wishes in avenging it on those honest true hearted men whose affections had been with him from his youth upwards. . . . [He had not recognized a single chief of the old Jackson party.] In reply he bet me I would find a Wilmot proviso man in the Cabinet!— Cass's man McClelland [,] I suppose— After this I could say no more & I can write no more— My grief is not for myself for I feel that I could get what I want [Now a judgeship for Montgomery].

He had remonstrated against the placing of Marcy in the Cabinet. To add James Campbell of Philadelphia, a henchman of "Old Buck's," and McClelland was more than he could bear. He did not care for Van Buren's disappointment, nor his own, "but it is on account of the cause I have served so faithfully & so long," he said. Van Buren believed all Westerners were impulsive in matters of the heart, and he considered Blair to be in that class. He knew Blair suffered intensely in his disappointments. He, therefore, pointed out the reliable evidences of Pierce's "con-

[7] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Feb. 24, 1853.

tinued confidence" in him and affection for him. These showed that Pierce was "honest; & if he will repose in you & admit you to his councils as freely as Genl Jackson & I did, and which your own conduct so amply justified, he will not go wrong for the moment of honest advice." Van Buren's spirit of open revolt was dead. He was mellowed by age and experience. He would be satisfied with Pierce if he showed honesty of purpose and accepted the advice of Blair.[8]

If the composition of the Cabinet was distasteful to Blair, with one or two exceptions, the disposal of the spoils was more so. The imperialistic and pompous inaugural address was in poor taste, although it satisfied a large portion of the Democracy that the President would be a safe man. His consideration of the paramountcy of the Compromise of 1850 and of the Union were especially pleasing. The Blairs accepted it with good grace and then closely observed the minor appointments. It was soon discernible that Pierce intended to build a machine to insure the retention of the government for himself and his party in 1856. Senators and Congressmen were given a free hand in their respective states. Instead of forming a compact political organization, however, he merely set the dogs after the bones. His own name did not have the magnetism of a Jackson, nor did his Cabinet include any statesmen of great prestige, save Marcy, although they were on the whole efficient, well-intentioned men. Factions in the focal points of New York and Missouri were uncontrollable. Even the Democracy of New Hampshire failed to bestow upon him its undivided support. This early factional strife was brought to public attention throughout the country by the ridicule heaped upon the administration by the New York *Herald*.[9]

The failure of the President to invest Montgomery with a position in the government did not deter his father in his persistence to have his son live in the East. His cherished hope was fulfilled at last, in 1853, when Montgomery bade good-bye to St. Louis and moved with his family to the mansion on Pennsylvania

[8] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Feb. 25, 1853.

[9] James Gordon Bennett had asked for the mission to France. It was given to John Y. Mason of Virginia, in payment for Virginia's support of Pierce at Baltimore. The disappointed Mr. Bennett became a thorn in Pierce's side through his control of the greatest newspaper in America at that time.



BLAIR MANSION

1651 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Avenue. This home was given to him by his father. He straightway began his practice of law before the Supreme Court. He remodeled the mansion, raised it another story, and with his income and modest fortune his family lived very comfortably, but not elegantly.

The Blair Mansion was centrally located on the Avenue where distinguished ladies passed during their parades before the White House on Sunday afternoons. Mrs. Montgomery Blair was socially at ease in her commodious home. The Blair hospitality was enjoyed by a large circle of friends. Distinguished friends from the states of Missouri, New Hampshire, and New York found a generous host at the Mansion. Mrs. Jefferson Davis "stopped in" on Sunday afternoons. Wives of Cabinet members were frequent visitors there. Wives of ministers and ambassadors came to drive with Mary Elizabeth to Silver Spring to visit the elder Blairs. Other ladies called to drive over to the Capitol to hear the speech of some distinguished senator.

The elder Blairs now galloped their horses into town more frequently than at any previous time. Mrs. Blair stopped with Mary Elizabeth, while her husband, after stabling his horses in the Blair stables, walked through Lafayette Square to gaze at the statue of Jackson, thence down the Avenue to the scene of action on "the Hill," speaking to acquaintances and talking to friends on the way. He usually stopped at Jackson Hall to visit Rives before he reached the Capitol. Once in a while during the spring and summer of 1853 he stopped to call on the President. The cordiality with which Blair was greeted at the White House was warmly reciprocated. The growth of Southern influence, however, continued to affect the President. Deplore it as he did, Blair and his friends were helpless. The defeat of Benton for the Senate was the final blow that caused Blair to turn anti-Pierce.

It will be remembered that the Blairs of Missouri had actively supported the Free-Soil party in Missouri in 1848. They worked unceasingly for the reëlection of Benton. The Calhoun-Cass-Jackson-Atchison combination was too powerful for them. The slave interests were in the saddle and a majority of the local newspapers were under their control. It appeared to be hopeless to try

to subdue that wing of the Democracy. It required the determination of the grim old Senator and the persuasively magnetic character of young Frank Blair to face those interests. Their problems were made more difficult because of Frank's radical views on slavery. Benton refused to go as far as Blair would have led him. Only expediency and the advice from Silver Spring kept Frank's tongue under control.

The center of Hunkerdom in St. Louis had been in the office of the *Reporter*. Frank and Gratz Brown wrote many of its leading editorials, and thus promoted the free-soil movement while they supported Benton. This machine did not work so smoothly as they had expected. The change of a proprietor caused some misunderstanding as to the editorial policy, and the Blairs, consequently, looked for another press. A group of men, including the Blairs and Brown, who had signed the free-soil manifesto in 1850, purchased the morning *Signal* in July, 1852, and changed its name to the *Missouri Democrat*. Frank agreed to become its chief editor. The *Union* was then merged with the *Democrat*. William S. McKee was added to the editorial staff and Blair, Brown, and McKee were responsible for the course of the paper until 1854, when Peter L. Foy succeeded Blair.[10]

Free-soilism developed with sufficient rapidity to strike fear into the hearts of staunch old Hunkers like Judge James B. Bowlin of St. Louis. The defeat of Benton did not stop it. It was especially hated by the Atchison faction, and denounced by all Cass and Douglas men. Their favorite term for it was "abolitionism."

The influx of Germans and Irish made a new element in which anti-slavery sentiment found fertile soil. Thanks to the able leadership of their friend, Henry Boernstein, the editor of a St. Louis German newspaper, the Blairs controlled the German vote. The Germans had a penchant for freedom and lent themselves easily to the anti-slavery movement. The Blairs and Brown capitalized that strength in the period of 1850 to 1860. The German element sent Frank to the legislature of his state in 1852 and 1854, and to Congress in 1856. Judge Bowlin begged Donelson to use the *Union* at Washington to forestall this movement set in motion in 1848 by the hated Blairs.

[10] C. P. Johnson, "Personal Recollections of Missouri's Eminent Statesmen," in *Proceedings* of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Jan., 1903; McClure, 255.

Frank won the esteem of his friends and of the Whigs in the legislature. The Whig candidate for governor in 1852 spent the greater portion of his time with Blair or near him, during the sojourn of the latter at Jefferson City. The Benton men proposed Blair for Speaker of the House, but the Atchison men defeated them. The most difficult problem which Blair faced was to secure the return of Benton to the Senate. He succeeded in staving off the election of a successor upon the expiration of Atchison's term until another popular election could be held. That time was to come in August, 1854. Before then, however, Pierce fell under the influence of Atchison in the settlement of appointments in Missouri. He had intimated that Benton was to have political preferment, and not until Benton left for St. Louis did Pierce permit Atchison to name some important appointees. His enemies crowed over him to his shame and disgust. He resolved to continue his political course as it was, but his self-respect demanded that he care for his "personal character." Montgomery Blair had been authorized to act for him on any appointment in Missouri during his absence, if the President desired information. Now Benton wanted his name dropped in connection with any subject that might arise between them. The turn of affairs was so disconcerting that he was "too much sickened at the stomach with disgust" to read and make a copy of his letter to Montgomery about it.[11]

The attempts of Benton to stage a come-back in 1854 were futile. The issues were for the third time the Jackson Resolutions. Blair at Silver Spring had no hope of success, and his fears were realized. During the great fight Benton hurried to the Kansas border to anathematize his enemies. He loudly proclaimed the Jackson Resolutions a treasonable act. He believed that the Kansas question was about to assume great importance. The whole negro question would become involved. The South was headed for secession. He advised free-soil Missourians to settle on bona-fide Indian lands in Nebraska. He struck at the enemy in his own territory. The pro-slavery men were furiously angered at Benton. Atchison did not want Nebraska territory settled and wrote to Treat about it as follows:[12]

[11] Blair MSS. April 30, 1853; Frank to Montgomery, Feb. 12, 1853.
[12] Treat MSS. Platte City, May 29, 1853.

Of all the humbugs the old Sinner has ever mounted, of all the lame blind, wind-broken, & Spavined hobbies, the old villain ever bestrode he has now mounted the most shabby.

When the state election was over and the Assembly met to elect a senator, the Benton men led by Blair and Brown could muster only about forty votes as compared to fifty-six for Atchison; there were sixty for the Whig candidate. The Atchison men tried to secure the passage of instructions to the Missouri senators on the subject of internal improvements. Enough Whigs joined the Blair-Benton faction to defeat that proposal. The Whigs and the Blair group united in the election of officials for the State Bank and on a few minor questions. They could not agree on a mutual candidate to defeat the Atchison faction. Days passed as balloting continued. The contest was noted throughout for its bitterness. One member resolved that "a veil be hung over the portrait" of Benton, that Claiborne Jackson be asked to absent himself from the House, and that no more liquor should be drunk by the members until the speaker was elected.[13] The Assembly failed to elect a senator. Frank was too dispirited to have the patience to write to Montgomery "about this terrible disaster."[14]

The defeat of Benton was hailed as a great victory for state-rights. In his defeat the Southern Democracy of Missouri believed it had checkmated Frank Blair and Gratz Brown, the men of whom it thought as "wheedlers" of Benton.[15] One editor jubilantly wrote that "Bentonism is buried in the tomb of the Capulets; abolitionism throughout the Union abashed; and another upholder of the Constitution secured to the service of the nation."

The elder Blair deeply resented the defeat of Benton. He placed the blame squarely upon Pierce, who had encouraged Atchison. As a matter of fact, Benton's power had ebbed away. Nine men had gone down to defeat with Benton. It was significant that Frank alone won on the ticket.

The Kansas-Nebraska territorial question was dragged into the Atchison-Benton feud. The territories beyond the confines of Missouri and Iowa were closed to white settlers. Those lands belonged

[13] *Journal* of the House of Representatives of Missouri, 1st Sess., 18th General Assembly; McClure, 93.

[14] Blair MSS. Frank to Montgomery, Sept. 13, 1854.

[15] Jefferson City *Examiner*, Apr. 5, 1855.

to the Indians who had been settled there when our government thought the plains unfit for white habitation. The Missourians and Iowans knew better. They asked that those lands be opened on a basis of squatter sovereignty. To do so, would be to renew the slave question. Atchison heeded the call of his pro-slavery constituents of Missouri. He and Senator Dodge of Iowa persuaded the none-too-reluctant Douglas, chairman of the Committee on Territories in the Senate, to introduce a bill for the organization of the Nebraska territory.

The nation as a whole was flourishing. Factories were increasing in size and number in the North. The population was swelling; the East gained 10 per cent from 1830 to 1850, the South 40 per cent, and the North 75 per cent. Capital was abundant. The fifties were noted for the abandonment of canals for railroads. Trunk-line railroads characterize the period in railway construction. Cities of the Mississippi Valley competed with one another to be starting points to the West. The Southern newspapers were filled with articles in which it was proposed that a railroad along the southern route be built. A number of cities held booster railroad conventions. The South was greatly concerned about the slowness of her growth as compared with that of the North. She hoped to prosper with a road to the West to begin at Memphis. Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, supported this scheme. Douglas and the Chicagoans were interested in a road to run westward from Chicago. But Douglas could not get a right-of-way through the Indian country until it was organized into a territory of the United States.

Douglas reported his bill in January of 1850. It offered new slave territory to a needy and disturbed South. One of the clauses on slavery provided that the Cass idea of squatter sovereignty should prevail in the new territory. A report from the committee to mollify anti-slavery people accompanied the bill. It suggested that the principles of the Compromise of 1850 should operate in Nebraska. This report failed to prevent a storm of protest against the bill arising in the North. The attempt to take slavery issues from the halls of Congress to the people proved to be an impossibility. Some changes in the original bill did not change its general tenor, except to cut the Nebraska territory into the

two divisions of Kansas and Nebraska. Douglas persuaded Pierce to support it, and the Washington *Union* followed their leadership.

An appeal went to the Free-Soilers and Germans to support the bill. The argument was advanced that a railroad and other improvements would fill the territories with people with anti-slavery sympathies. They would uphold the two old Compromises at the polls in their own localities. The opposition branded the bill a criminal betrayal of sacred and precious rights. Douglas replied with an intemperate speech, full of vulgar language, and "senatorial billingsgate" in the Senate on January 30, 1854. Not only had he precipitated a battle over the bill, but he paved the way for a train of woe on the Kansas-Missouri border which was to emerge as one of the bloodiest civil wars in history.

The Blairs very naturally considered the Kansas-Nebraska bill an affront to all supporters of free-soil inclinations. They, therefore, entered the battle with their armor buckled on. Blair wrote to Allen of Ohio [16] that "the whole work was done by the Southern plotters operating through their automaton whom they pull with a string and move with the ease of a supple-Jack." Douglas, he wrote, hoped to leap over the shoulders of Cass, Buchanan, and Pierce into the very arms of the South. But Blair still had faith in the masses. He begged Allen, who was in enforced retirement, to rise as a Jackson man to flay the betrayers of honest Democracy in Ohio. He emphatically told Van Buren that he would prefer a Whig victory in 1856 to one of the Democracy led by doughfaces or nullifiers.

He had concluded that deep-dyed diabolical influences prevailed at Washington. Who would make a suitable standard bearer for the party, he did not know, unless Benton or Houston could be popularized. Pierce had humbled himself in the dust at the feet of Jefferson Davis, Atchison, and such people. They rejoiced at Benton's defeat as "the great triumph of the hour"! But thank God, the *sine qua non* of the anti-slavery men was now "no more slave states admissable"! He urged upon his friends in Congress to assert the power of Congress to legislate slavery out of the territories. He wrote articles for Bryant and Bigelow's *Evening*

[16] Feb. 10, 1854. Allen MSS. Quoted in full by McGrane, *Allen*, 136-37.

Post in an attempt to separate the Democracy. That paper, however, ran headlong into the ban on abolitionist literature set up by the South. Frank marshalled his forces in St. Louis and in a January meeting of the Democracy of that city condemned the administration for certain of its measures. As a member of a committee on resolutions he assisted in the framing of a set of resolutions calling for the organization of a territorial government for Nebraska, the extension of preëmption rights to that territory, and the immediate construction of a railroad to the Pacific at national expense. The great issue before the Democrats, said the committee, was the reëlection of Benton to the Senate of the United States. Frank and his father were ready to bolt, and would have denounced Pierce at once had it not been for the restraining hand of Montgomery who advised the pursuit of a wary policy. Frank impetuously wrote to his brother that "at the same time I entreat you not to trust them [the administration] an inch." [17]

Other independent Democrats were active. A group of them made known their opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in an address entitled, "The Appeal of the Independent Democrats." Senators Benjamin Wade, Charles Sumner, S. P. Chase, and others signed it. The Northern press condemned the bill. Douglas confessed that he "could travel from Boston to Chicago by the light of his burning effigies." Undaunted by the terrific fight against the bill, Douglas succeeded in pushing it through the Senate on March 4, 1854. Alexander Stephens skillfully directed its course in the House. He realized that it was arraying the Free-Soilers against the South, but he believed it would have a "permanent effect upon the public mind." He was right. "The effect of such a victory at this time is important," he wrote; "we are on the eve of much greater issues in my opinion." Again he was right, but the issues were different from what he expected them to be.[18]

Hope of harmony between the ultra-North and ultra-South was gone. Some men welcomed the break, while others were saddened by conflicting emotions. Wilmot, Allen, Chase, Dix, and the Blairs were at last ready to join in a movement to fight the aggressive South. They were too often to forget that the

[17] Blair MSS. Frank to Montgomery, Jan. 26, 1854.
[18] Stephens MSS. Stephens to Wm. A. Barnwell, May 7, 1854.

plantation system was fighting for its life, and that the South had some honest convictions. These stalwart Free-Soil Democrats feared that the South would buy Northern leaders like Buchanan and Douglas with promises of support, that it would continue to control the government, and that it would establish itself in perpetuity at Washington. "I hope there will be honest patriots enough found to resist it," said Blair, and that they "will be rebuked. I am willing to devote the balance of my life to this object." He was ready for war against the "high and low" conspirators.

Blair went to Lindenwald to review a part of Benton's "Thirty Years View" and to discuss politics. He supplied Benton with a large part of the information for his "Thirty Years View." He persuaded Benton to eliminate many of his florid sentences and paragraphs. What Blair and Van Buren said at Lindenwald is not on record. A little later, he told Blair that the day had passed when any agreement could be reached with the slave interests. It was absolute abjection on the part of the North, or nothing, or trouble.[19] He could see no good coming "out of the next Presidential election," and refused to waste any "solicitude on the subject."[20] Blair disagreed; he proposed to enter the arena to see that "when things get damned bad, they must mend." He had bet on Pierce and lost. His Scottish blood called for a victory.

[19] Blair MSS. Oct. 3, 1855; Dix, *Memoirs,* II, 285, Dix to Benton, Apr. 15, 1854; Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Aug. 5, 1855.
[20] Blair MSS. Van Buren to Blair, Nov. 19, 1855.

CHAPTER XXI

The First Republican National Campaign

Democracy does not reside in the organization of intriguers, but in the mass of the people.—F. P. Blair, Sr., 1855.

I

The Congressional and state elections in Missouri in 1854 attracted national interest. The Whig party was in the throes of death, and the new party which was about to come forth to challenge the supremacy of Southern Democracy was in process of being born. The situation in Missouri as it has been described was merely a part of what was happening the country over.

But the troubles of Missouri were centered about Kansas and the embittered contest between the Benton-Blair and the Atchison-Claiborne Jackson wings of the Democracy for the control of the state. The plight of the distracted state was lamented by the anti-slavery press. Greeley of the New York *Tribune* struck the keynote of freedom's cause when he declared on the question of Kansas: [1]

> We must make a successful stand just here—in resistance to the assumed right of Congress to uphold, recognize, or in any manner legalize slavery in a Territory, and also of the right of the first few thousands of squatters who rush into a new Territory to establish and perpetuate slavery therein, or we shall have no solid ground at all to stand on.

The Blairs fully agreed with Greeley. They did not believe that a lasting internal peace in this country could be attained until the nation was assured that no more slave states were to be admitted to the Union. They were ready to lead a moral crusade against slavery if it insured a free country north of the Mason and

[1] *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, July 28, Aug. 25, 1854.

Dixon line. Political parties and offices became to them merely a means to an end. They retained old friendships unbroken, although they left their pro-slavery friends to their own reasoning. The Blairs were extremely positive characters. Men of their natures make bitter enemies and steadfast friends. That happened to them in varying degrees during the period between 1848 to 1877. It cannot be said of them, as it was of Martin Van Buren,

> You couldn't tell, by seeing his track,
> Whether he was going or coming back.

The Blair family found the columns of the New York *Tribune* open to them at times from 1852 to 1872. The *Tribune* in 1854 heralded Frank as a young champion of freedom. The Blairs and Greeley begged for a reorganization of parties on a basis of slavery or no slavery. The power of the *Tribune* is difficult to estimate. Every thirty hours 182,000 copies of it went to its readers. In those days one man subscribed for his favorite paper, and read it to six or ten of his neighbors before he destroyed it or tenderly laid it away for future reference. The editor of this powerful organ hated the idea of the Kansas-Nebraska bill as much as he disliked "Seymour and Rum." To the Blairs, the bill appeared to be an attempt to inflict a deadly uneconomic system on Kansas and insure the perpetuity of a slave oligarchy.[2]

Frank Blair traveled over Missouri speaking against slavery and Atchison. He exhorted the Germans, the Know-nothings, the Whigs, and the Free-Soil Democrats to fight, fight,—fight anything that smacked of slavery. Being a master of slaves, he was not deterred in the least by that fact in his denunciation of the system. Like John the Baptist in the wilderness, he preached without mincing words. He argued that wherever slavery went it blasted the economic prosperity of the common people; it sapped the soil of its strength and left it a barren waste; and it corroded the morals of society and left it with two divisions—aristocratic leeches and a helpless mass of slaves and poor whites. He wanted a new party inspired with the love of country and freedom, and he wanted it to be composed of all men who opposed the "rotten Democracy" then led by the Pierces, the Bu-

[2] *Collections* of the Kansas State Historical Society, XV.

chanans, and the Yanceys. This new party must be imbued with the spirit of his political preceptor—Andrew Jackson.

The Free-Soil Democrats of St. Louis were faithful. The Germans were unquestionably opposed to Atchison and his cohorts. They joined Blair in his crusade. The Broadheads and the Filleys were dependable. There came also to Blair, James S. Rollins, who is familiarly known as the "Father of the University of Missouri." Blair and Rollins usually worked coöperatively with one purpose in view—to defeat the pro-slavery men. Rollins, like Blair, was fearless. As a prominent lawyer in Boone County, he had been one of the two men to defend the Mormons in the Missouri courts in 1840. He did it when the times demanded of him the qualities of a man of steel. His constituents respected him for his manly qualities, his noble purposes, and his scholarly attainments. They sent him to the state legislature and to Congress. He was at times a Know-nothing, a Republican, a Democrat, and always a democrat at heart. Rollins and Blair were not squeamish when they believed it was necessary to stand for election on the ticket of the leading party in a district, even though their political views were not in harmony with that party. They had a high purpose in view—the organization of an anti-slavery party.

Frank left nothing undone in the spread of political propaganda. The Blairs well knew that Benton wrote his *Thirty Years View* to memorialize his own great work in Congress, to leave a history of Congress during the period of his Congressional life, and particularly, to strike a mortal blow at the Southern Democracy. They impatiently waited for its completion. When it finally came from the press, Frank encouraged a wide sale of it in Missouri. He hoped that it would redound to Benton's profit and to his party's gain. He kept Montgomery at Washington informed about any change on the political chessboard in Missouri. Montgomery was indebted to Pierce in 1855 for a political preferment,[3] the favor of which held him in leash for a time. His close connection with Pierce made it possible for Frank to use that proximity to some advantage. He had come to detest Pierce, and so we find him writing:[4]

[3] He was appointed Solicitor-General for United States Court of Claims in 1853.
[4] Blair MSS. Frank to Montgomery, n. d.

I wonder if the President knows that Atchison and the Antis in Missouri have denounced him & his administration in the bitterest terms—Atchison has done it openly everywhere. . . . Pierce ought to know what these fellows say of him, whom he has endeavored to propitiate with office.

Frank's trump card was the support of St. Louis which voted against Atchison when it decided to win the terminus of the Pacific railroad which Douglas and Calhoun were urging for their respective sections. Blair, striking while the iron was at white-heat, spoke harshly of Atchison's unfaithfulness to St. Louis when he failed to make the city the terminal point of the proposed railroad. St. Louisans believed that they could tap the riches of the East by building the transcontinental road to San Francisco. The accomplishment of that great project would, they reasoned, make St. Louis one of the foremost cities of the world. The State Historical Society made the project the subject of serious discussion. Senator Benton, Western to the core, said in substance: "There is the East—there is China, and there is our East; between the two lies St. Louis." It was an expression of faith in our "Manifest Destiny." Senator Atchison appeared to close the door to the future greatness of St. Louis. How? Blair said that the Senator had appointed the enemies of Missouri to the committee in the Senate that had to select a route, that he protested against the selection of the central route, and that he had voted for the Gadsden Purchase which made a southern route possible. No senator could be guilty of such an act unless he was a tool of the nullifiers. In that capacity he had originated the dastardly Kansas-Nebraska Act with the attendant purpose of extending slavery. Missourians should defeat him, elect Benton, protect slavery where it was and make Kansas a free state.[5] Blair voiced the sentiments of St. Louisans in the halls of the Missouri legislature. The defeat of Atchison for the Senate soon followed.

The "Kentucky Clique," as the Frank Blair-Gratz Brown followers were known, was anathema to all pro-slavery men in Missouri. These men, said the Jefferson City (Missouri) *Examiner,* were the abolitionists, the "hucksters behind the scenes," who controlled the Missouri legislature, and who purposed to capitalize

[5] F. P. Blair, Jr. Speech before the legislature of Missouri, 1855. Pamphlet.

on Benton's losses. That was exactly what Blair and Brown did, but the mistaken *Examiner* assured them that not a single true Democrat would ever again support Benton or his lieutenant.[6]

Men of Missouri did not mince words. Pro-slavery advocates said slavery was *"the* issue, paramount to all others." Protagonists of the "peculiar institution" were certain that the time had come for the South squarely to face the issue or else be a "doomed region." They thought of abolitionists, Free-Soilers, Know-nothings, Liberty Partyites, and "Black Republicans" as one hated class. They recognized Frank as the leader of the first, second, and last of these groups in Missouri.

A majority of the uncompromising friends of slavery were honest in their convictions that the institution was advantageous to the masters and the slaves. Their argument that, since Missouri was a slave state it was consequently *"prima facie* evidence that Slavery" was its true interest, was a specious one. They earnestly believed that any man who opposed that theory was *ipso facto* an enemy of the state. Open warfare was, therefore, invoked against anti-slavery men.

The Southern press encouraged its readers to incite pro-slavery men to move to Kansas, or go themselves to snatch the territory from the clutches of the abolitionists. Hundreds of Missourians were urged to be in readiness to invade Kansas at any moment. The burning of the Free-Soil paper, the *Luminary,* at Parkville, Missouri, was lauded as a patriotic act to preserve Southern institutions. The outrage was excused because "it sometimes becomes necessary to act without regard to law to secure peace to a community."[7] It is easily understood that under these conditions in distracted Missouri, Democrat Mr. Birch sued Democrat Mr. Benton for slander, that the Democratic stormy petrel, Mr. Blair, mercilessly assailed the uncompromising slavophile Democrat, Mr. Atchison. While these leaders led their factions of the old Democracy farther apart, Republicanism grew stronger and stronger.

How Frank Blair escaped an assassin's hand during that vindictive conflict is a mystery. The use of the gun and the knife was a common thing in western Missouri in the forties and fifties.

[6] *Examiner,* April-May, 1855.

[7] *Examiner,* May 3, 1855.

More than once word was sent to him by solicitous friends that his life was threatened. He often laughed at their fears and informed any "damned coward" who wished to take his life that he was ready to meet him. Desperate characters usually "lost their nerve" once they came within sight of him. While the "Border Ruffians" crossed into Kansas illegally to stuff the ballot boxes in that territory, he denounced them in the face of mixed audiences composed of men who silently cursed him and of those who gave him noisy applause.

It is interesting to speculate on the probable outcome of the conflict had Kansas been "perfectly free to form and regulate" her domestic institutions in her own way. But human beings are imperfect. The North and South did interfere. Earnest men and fiery spirits possessed of unshakable loyalty to a moral and economic cause denied the principle of squatter sovereignty a chance to be fairly tried. Before the Kansas-Nebraska bill passed into law the Emigrant Aid Societies were ready to send to Kansas money, literature, and voters. No well-informed person can deny their honesty of purpose in their crusade. At the same time the Blue Lodges of Missouri were just as sincere in their determination to prevent "abolitionist" control of Kansas. They used the more fanciful, but less effective, methods of the two factions.

Slavocracy did not want to see its human property in Missouri, valued at approximately $35,000,000, endangered by making Missouri a peninsula jutting out in an expanse of free territory. The owners of slaves were easily incited by bands of slavery propagandists to commit outrages to protect their peculiar property. They, after all, were sons of frontiersmen, if not always frontiersmen themselves. Their love for the inalienable right to equality was not broad enough to include *all men*. They, nevertheless, were just as certain that *all governing white men* were equal as their forefathers had been when they wrote it in the Declaration of Independence. Environment and heritage had not in the least weakened their belief in that theory. They wanted no absentee societies running their business, nor did they propose to stand idle while their valuable property was in danger. Settle it at the ballot box? Certainly! But they decided to be first and last at the ballot

boxes! It would have been recreancy on their part not to have been there.

The call of Senator Atchison to his fellow Missourians to save the "institution" in this life-and-death struggle was heeded by thousands of men. His clarion call that resounded throughout the state ran thus: "When you reside within one day's journey of the Territory, and when your peace, your quiet, and your property depend upon your action, you can, without any exertion, send five hundred of your young men who will vote in favor of your institutions. Should each county in the State of Missouri only do its duty, the question will be decided quietly and peaceably at the first ballot-box." [8]

Some time previous to Atchison's call Senator Seward on the floor of the Senate had responded to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, thus:

> Come on, then, gentlemen of the slave States! Since there is no escaping your challenge, I accept it on the behalf of Freedom. We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas, and God give the victory to the side that is stronger in numbers, as it is in right.

The *Squatter Sovereign,* a newspaper founded in Atchison, Kansas, by Missourians who named their town after their beloved Senator, confidently said, after the Social Bands and Blue Lodges had invaded Kansas to control the ballot boxes:

> We can tell the impertinent scoundrels of the [New York] *Tribune* that they may exhaust an ocean of ink, their Emigrant Aid Societies spend their millions and billions, their representatives in Congress spout their heretical theories till doomsday, and his Excellency appoint abolitionist after free-soiler as our Governor, yet we will continue to lynch and hang, tar and feather and drown, every white-livered abolitionist who dares to pollute our soil.

A motley mob of them invaded Kansas to defeat the forces of freedom. There were men on horses, men afoot, men in carts and wagons, all armed with squirrel rifles, pistols, bowie-knives, or daggers, and many with two or more weapons, marching on to Kansas to defend the ballot boxes against the "Black Abolitionists." And thus a horde of gentlemen slavocrats, small farm-

[8] Quoted in Francis Curtis's, *The Republican Party* (2 vols., New York, 1904), I, 238.

ers, and hirelings, some of whom were educated in the proverbial little red-schoolhouses and dressed like "Farmer-Johns," and some of whom were educated in the University-of-the-Wilderness—roamers of the borders, met the abolitionists. The Southern battalions won a temporary victory, but the ultimate result was in favor of the Bigelows, the Lovejoys, the Blairs, the Wilmots, the John Browns, the Lowells, and the Garrisons.

The raging fires of human hatred on the border of Missouri and Kansas spread over the Union. A tremor of fear shook the frames of prophetic souls as they saw afar the approaching catastrophe which threatened to engulf the nation. The Republic with its two-faced democracy was destined to be tried in the crucible of battle. They knew that at the bottom of it all was the diabolical institution of slavery. Father Blair's prophecy of 1833—that the differences between the two sections, North and South, would end in bloody civil war—now a score of years later appeared to be near fulfillment.

Congressmen hurled angry epithets at one another in the Capitol where the spirit of coöperation should have prevailed. Congress was nothing more then, as it is today, than a mere photograph of the people. Millions of Americans hung over the overdrawn pictures of the horrors of slavery as they were depicted by Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Streams of tears were shed for the imagined thousands of much-abused Uncle Toms. The story of Uncle Tom first appeared in installments in the *National Era,* published by Dr. Bailey in Washington, D. C. It was published in book form in March, 1852. An unprecedented sale of it began at once, when 3,000 sold on the day of its publication and 300,000 copies during its first year. It was soon dramatized, and swayed thousands of people who were not readers of books.

Henry Ward Beecher, having long since wisely decided to cast his lot with the emancipationists, stirred the New Yorkers to the depths of their souls. They scrambled to pay for seats on Sunday in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, where they might hear his effusive "wit, wisdom, patriotism, and pathos, mingled with the loftiest strains of eloquence." His forensic achievements in 1851, his unusual proclivities in expediency, his ability to convince himself that he was right, and his impassioned oratory, made

him a popular idol. He swayed men and women by the thousands. Other ministers were no less busy in the cause. "Pulpit-fires" in the North had been gradually heating the tinder for years. Now the fiery opposition to slavery began to leap like a prairie fire. Eloquent speakers, an angry press, and the incomparable *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* convinced tens of thousands that they must resist the aggressions of that damnable institution of slavery. The New York *Tribune* pronounced Douglas Americanism "the greatest enemy of liberty now in the world." "The storm that is rising," wrote Senator Seward, "is such an one as this country has never yet seen. The struggle will go on, but it will be a struggle for the whole American people." [9]

President Pierce suffered mental agony because of his failure to meet the demands of warring factions. His nerves broke under the strain, and he turned to drink for relief. Emancipationists regarded him as a fawning politician seeking a reëlection. "I think the Almighty will certainly punish Pierce for being such a Knave & Jackass," wrote Frank Blair to his brother, Montgomery, in the spring of 1855.[10]

The death knell of the Whig party was sounded in 1852. Brave old General Scott had been "routed, horse, foot and artillery" in that campaign. The country was not interested in the old issues. Mr. Bovay wrote of it, after the Civil War, as being a campaign in which men "talked or thought" of "slavery in the States, slavery in the Territories, the Fugitive Slave law, and nothing else." Before another two years had passed, bringing the country to face its fall state elections, the indications throughout the North and West were that the moment was propitious for the organization of a new party. Merchants, lawyers, farmers, business men, laborers in forest, field, and workshop were alike protesting against the extension of slavery. Only eight of the eighty-eight German presses in the United States favored the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

The disfavor with which the Act was greeted is illustrated in the reception of Douglas in Chicago when he returned to explain his Act. It was late in August, 1854, when he reached his home city. The sullen opposition which greeted him must have been

[9] De Alexander, II, 193.

[10] Blair MSS. June 14.

very disturbing. The commercial interests of Chicago were incensed at his non-support of the River and Harbor bill. The Know-nothings had no love for a Senator who compromised them on July 4, and the anti-slavery people held no brief for a man who had been instrumental in the overthrow of the Compromise of 1820. Mr. Rhodes graphically describes the scene in Chicago on September 1, the day on which Douglas attempted to speak, in the following words: [11]

> During the afternoon the flags of all the shipping in the harbor were hung at half mast; at dusk the bells of the churches were tolled as if for a funeral, and above the din might be heard the mournful sound of the big city bell. A doleful air pervaded the city. A host of men assembled to hear the justification of the senator, but among them he had hardly a friend. The first few sentences of the speech were heard in silence, but when he made what was considered an offensive remark, a terrible groan rolled up from the whole assemblage, followed by the unearthly Know-nothing yell.

The Republican party was born in a revolt of the masses. Its birth was a result of many contributing factors. In the first place, there had developed two unlike economic systems in the North and in the South. The gradual evolution of social morals had led a large part of our people to condemn the system at the basis of Southern life. The economic competition of slave labor interfered with the welfare of free white labor, and it hindered the prosperity of the southern section of our country. In the second place, the long years of labor of the reformers were reaching a culmination—the years of fruition. The spontaneous outburst of indignation of the Northern masses at the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill is an evidence of it. The people, in the third place, had traditionalized the Compromise of 1820, and they had hoped to see the Compromise of 1850 become a finality. The great name of Henry Clay, the Pacificator, was rapidly becoming idolized in its connection with those compromises, and, furthermore, the influx of white laborers and farmers from Europe into the great Northwest and West during the forties and fifties rapidly strengthened anti-slavery sentiment. Thousands of those political refugees

[11] Vol. II, 61-2.

sought homes in America to enjoy political freedom. Slavery was the hated opposite of their dearest hopes and aspirations. How could this country be the "land of the free and the home of the brave" when one-half was free, the other half slave? In the fifth place, the Whigs were about dead. The old Jeffersonian party had revolted against the Federalists. Power and long tenure of office made Jeffersonian Democracy conservative and out of harmony with the new America. A Jacksonian revolt overthrew effete Jeffersonianism. It was the new West, the new philosophy of equality, that Jackson took to Washington. But that was in 1828. Jeffersonianism had lasted from 1800 to 1828; now another period of twenty-eight years was nearly gone—only two years to reach 1856. Party ties in 1854 were as confused as church affiliations were when Joseph Smith founded Mormonism. Free-Soilers were at cross-purposes with Abolitionists, and both of them disagreed with Emancipationists and Know-nothings; there were Sons of Freemen and Liberty Party men; there were Free-Soil Whigs, slave Whigs and all kinds of conservative Whigs; and there were Free-Soil Democrats, and especially, the "Democracy of the South." The Free-Soilers had a similar goal, but they were disagreed as to what method to use to reach it. They, consequently, had fallen to cutting the throats of their political brothers. And last, factions of political leaders were struggling for power; they risked the fate of a nation for selfish victory. A new generation had arisen which was guided far less by principles than were the indomitable Calhoun and his compeers.

The legions of Free-Soilers needed a new organization born of compromise, one that was militant and virile. The Kansas-Nebraska Act supplied the momentary stimulus which was necessary to provoke hot denunciations and beget that consolidation of local organizations which was needed to perfect a new party. Protestors held meetings north of the Mason and Dixon line from the Atlantic to the western frontier. A majority of them were known simply as anti-Nebraska conventions. In some states they were "The People's Party" conventions. The welding of them into one party was the supreme task of able and discerning men. What should the organization be called, once it was perfected?

Major Alvan E. Bovay of Ripon, Wisconsin, claims the honor of being the originator of the *Republican* party.[12] In February, 1854, a call was made to the citizens of Ripon to meet to "consider the grave issues which were assuming an aspect of such alarming importance." Bovay walked from house to house as he canvassed the one hundred voters in Ripon. Earnest conversation and explanations got about half of them to attend his meeting. Whigs, Democrats, and Free-Soilers took part in the condemnation of the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Other meetings were held by these Riponites and they later severed their old party ties to join a new party. The movement spread over the state. A state convention was held in July of 1854. It completed the party organization for the state. A majority of Congressmen and one senator were captured in the fall elections by this upstart party.[13]

Hot in their resistance to pro-slavery movements, citizens of the Zachary Chandler type held a meeting at Jackson, Michigan. The Free-Soil Democrats at Jackson had held a meeting on February 20, in which they declared freedom to be national and slavery sectional. The Kansas-Nebraska bill, they said, was "an infamous outrage on justice, humanity, and good faith." On July 6, a mass meeting at Jackson considered measures which duty demanded of them "as citizens of a free State, to take in reference to the late acts of Congress on the subject of slavery, and its anticipated further extension." Vigorous speeches were made by able men to a very enthusiastic audience. These voters of Michigan comprehended the situation into which the country had fallen to about the same extent as did those of Wisconsin. They declared slavery to be a "great moral, social, and political evil"; they asked for the repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave law. A resolution was adopted pledging the participants to cooperation with the Republicans until the contest between slavery and anti-slavery interests ended. The convention recommended the call of a national convention of interested states to adopt effectual measures to resist the extension of slavery. The term "Republican" was adopted for a party name.

It was now evident that complacency and concession in the

[12] Many men and almost as many states have claimed at one time or another the honor of having been the first to organize the Republican party.

[13] Flower, ch. 14; A. F. Gilman, *The Origin of the Republican Party* (1914), 10.

North were doomed. The people of that section put conscience and morality in the sphere of politics. "In March, 1854, Edward Everett presented to the Senate a remonstrance from three thousand and fifty New England clergymen against the Kansas-Nebraska bill." Others came from New York City. Even Douglas was persuaded to introduce petitions against his own bill.[14] Prominent men were casting their lot with the movement before it was well under way. Among them were Senators Chase, Sumner, and Wade. A group of Congressmen, led by Elihu Washburne of Illinois and Dr. Bailey, editor of the *National Era,* met in Washington and issued an innocuous anti-slavery address which some one pronounced to be a document without a "trumpet tone." It nevertheless showed a tendency toward commitment.

Senator Seward's speech of February 17, in which he denounced the Kansas-Nebraska bill in the Senate, came at the right time to be very effective. The Senator was a devout Whig; he was not an impassioned orator, nor was he always an effective speaker. His speech, though he did not consider the question one of morals but rather one of statesmanship and politics, nearly reached the plane of his great speech of 1850, in which he astonished the country with his theory of a "higher law" which would ultimately extinguish slavery. In his speech of 1854 he concluded that,

> The slavery agitation you depreciate so much is an eternal struggle between conservatism and progress; between truth and error; between right and wrong. . . . You may legislate, and abrogate, as you will, but there is a Superior Power that overrules all; that overrules not only your actions and all your refusals to act, but all human events, to the distant but inevitable result of the equal and universal liberty of all men.

This speech in the Senate created a profound impression throughout the North. Rhodes believed it "affected the minds of more men than any speech delivered on that side of the question in Congress." Senator Houston had it reprinted in German for the benefit of the German settlers in Texas. The revolters north of the borderland of cotton and corn turned to Seward in the ex-

[14] Frederic Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward* (2 vols., New York, 1900), I, 356.

pectancy that he would become their Moses. His experience in politics and his ability made him a likely candidate for the presidency. "He was the idol of the anti-slavery Whigs." The New York *Times* thought it highly probable that Seward would be elected President by the Free States in 1856. Why did he fail to grasp the hand of fortune?

Seward wanted another election to the Senate. He was busy in seeing that his supporters were elected to the legislature. He was too conservative a Whig to risk his political fortunes with a party as uncertain of success as the young Republican party appeared to be. Not a speech, not a word of encouragement came from his lips in favor of the Republicans. The Know-nothings came to dislike him as much as he disliked them. His chance to become the Jefferson of the new party passed, and with it, his chances for the presidency. It was a movement for the states to develop, said Seward, not one for national concern. He could not "sink the politician in the statesman." [15]

The problem of a leader of the press was as important as that of personal leadership. The small fry were weekly spreading ink on acres of paper. A nationally known press was needed. The Washington *Union* was hopelessly Democratic. The New York *Times* had no inclination to become the leader of the radicals. Weed, always politic, decided to cling to the dying Whiggish elements. Mr. Bovay had met Horace Greeley in 1852, at which time he begged the old editor to assume the leadership of the press in behalf of the new movement. Greeley had a faint hope that there would be a North, but he hesitated to become the leader in the organization of the new party. "I am a beaten, broken-down, used-up politician," he wrote to Bovay, "and have the soreness of many defeats in my bones. However, I am ready to follow any lead that promises to hasten the day of Northern emancipation." Finally, Greeley, a free-lance Whig, published an article on "Party Names and Public Duty," June 16, 1854. It ran as follows: [16]

> We should not much care whether those (Free-Soilers, Whigs, Abolitionists, etc.) thus united were designated Whigs, Free Democrats or something else; though we think some simple name like

[15] Rhodes, II, 67-69.

[16] Flower, 15, 163; Curtis, *op. cit.*, 214.

Republican would more fitly designate those who have united to restore the Union to its true mission of champion and promulgator of liberty rather than propagandist of slavery.

At last the *Tribune* had adopted Bovay's suggestion that the new party be designated the Republican party. It did not insist on that particular name as the article just quoted indicates.

In about two years every state in which there was an organization widely to oppose the extension of slavery had adopted the term Republican. The name was an appealing one. In the first place, wrote Bovay in 1884, it meant "the common weal," and is suggestive of equality; (2) it is a single name, not double like Free-Democrat or Liberty Party; (3) it is capable of being used as a noun or an adjective, and may be used in "its application to a party or to an individual"; (4) it is the name by which Jefferson always designated his party; (5) there were thousands of German citizens of the United States who cherished the name *Republicaner;* other immigrants knew of and revered the terms of *Republicanos* and *Republicains.* The name *Republican* would possess charm for the new Americans and carry prestige among them. And lovers of free-soil, especially, could adopt it without hesitation.

The love for the name *Republican* lingered in the minds of those who were admirers of Jefferson and Jackson. Those superb Democrats had endorsed the theory of equality and republicanism. They recalled that Jefferson had written into the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, a clause for the restriction of slavery. The states of Georgia and South Carolina had objected to it, and it was stricken out. Again in 1784, Jefferson wrote another prohibitive clause on slavery in the Ordinance to organize territory west of the Appalachians. An unhealthy Congress defeated it, and by that defeat, opened the road to the Civil War. The famous Ordinance of 1787, passed by an already defunct Congress, did, however, include the important clause to prohibit slavery in territory north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi Rivers. This revival of Jeffersonianism and Jacksonianism in 1854 would, many leaders knew, cause thousands of Free-Soil Democrats to join whole-heartedly in the formation of the Republican party.

Greeley sprinkled the pages of his *Tribune* with articles which called for action. He was not certain for a time that he wished to break openly with the Whigs, but after Weed and Seward snubbed him, he waited no longer. He, however, asked on July 28, 1854, what must be done. He answered by saying that the people must "draw together, organize and discipline a party of Freedom—a party animated and rendered efficient by incidental successes, preparatory to more decisive efforts." After another month had passed, he concluded that "we can retreat neither with safety nor with honor" beyond the solid ground of a free Kansas, of the principles of Jefferson, and of the Wilmot Proviso.[17] Two factors had brought him face to face with the question of party reorganization—(1) Border-Ruffians and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and (2) local politics in the state of New York. The refusal of Weed to grant Greeley his wish to become the nominee of the Whigs for lieutenant-governor of New York, in the state convention in September, 1854, was the second reason why Seward lost the nomination of his party for President in 1860.

It is safe to conclude that no one man organized the Republican party. It was a spontaneous uprising. There were three leading political factions which organized the Republican party: the Free-Soilers, including Abolitionists, Know-nothings and Know-somethings, who formed a nucleus; the Northern Whigs who were opposed to the extension of slavery; and the anti-Nebraska Democrats. Without either of the last two, the new party could not have succeeded in its work. It had active organizations in all of the states in the Upper Mississippi Valley in the fall of 1854. There were organizations of "The People's Party" or Republicans in some of the Eastern states, but there the party made slower progress. The Know-nothings were strong competitors. Aliens were there in large numbers. Many people still hoped to avoid the slavery issue as a national one. There were other minor factors which kept them from readily attaching themselves to a strictly anti-slavery-extension party. Time and circumstances were required to complete a successful organization. Nevertheless, the Know-nothings carried Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts,

[17] *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Aug. 25, 1854.

New Hampshire, Kentucky, and California in the fall elections. They lost six other states by small margins. The newly created Republican party carried Maine, Vermont, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Indiana. The Whigs won a poor victory in New York only because Weed and Seward decided to remain Whig. The Whig nominee was elected governor over Democrat Seymour by 309 votes, but 27 out of a possible 33 Congressmen from that state were anti-Nebraska Democrats. The Democrats lost their majority in the House of Representatives of the United States.

A galaxy of younger political leaders had bolted their parties. Oliver P. Morton of Indiana walked amidst hisses and taunts out of a Democratic convention in his state when it endorsed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. "Your heads are getting kinkey," the loyal Democrats cried, as they told Morton and his friends to "go and equalize yourselves with niggers." A friend, leaving the convention with him, turned upon the delegates as he neared the door and thundered, "Hell dawns upon the Democratic party from this day onward." [18] Charles Sumner and Henry Wilson supplanted C. F. Adams as leaders of the Free-Soil party in Massachusetts after 1848. Sumner was a "Conscience Whig" turned Free-Soiler. Wilmot led the Pennsylvania Free-Soilers into the Republican ranks, crying "Free Soil, Free Speech and Free Men."

Meantime Chase and Benjamin Wade had urged the organization of a "Democracy of the people" to oppose the servile Democracy then in control in Ohio and the nation. Their movement against the Kansas-Nebraska Act resulted in the reversal of Ohio's vote of 1852 by giving the Republicans a majority of 77,000 in 1854. Every Congressman elected in 1854 was an anti-Nebraska man. Chase now had some revenge for the "shafts and ridicule" and snubs to which he had been subjected in the Senate by the Democracy. His party retired him from the Senate, but the Republicans triumphantly elected him as their first governor of Ohio in 1855. Though he labored under Republican colors, he called himself an "Independent Democrat," his object being, as he said, to free the

[18] William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1899), I, 39.

"Liberal Democrats" from the pro-slavery wing of the Democracy.[19]

In Illinois, Democratic Lyman Trumbull and John M. Palmer who "had always been a Democrat, *'honestly,* and *sincerely,'*" formed a political merger with Whig Lincoln to defeat the forces of popular-sovereignty Douglas. Free-Soilers and Abolitionists like Chase, Giddings, and Cassius M. Clay came to the state to aid in the defeat of the "Little Giant." The liberty-loving Germans had held a meeting to protest against the Kansas-Nebraska Act just six days after its passage. By February they were much aroused against it. Led by such able men as Francis A. Hoffmann, a penniless German immigrant of 1840, then a Chicago lawyer and banker, later to be lieutenant-governor of Illinois, and the lovable Hans Buschbauer of Wisconsin, and others like Frederick Hecker, George Schneider, and Gustave Koerner, they pledged their allegiance to the principle of liberty and no slavery instead of loyalty to their beloved Democracy. The Democratic party tried in vain to conciliate these outraged Germans, many of whom became Republicans. At one of their mass meetings where the influence of Hoffmann prevailed he declared in a thrilling speech:[20]

We have no inclination whatever to interfere with the rights of the South, and though we may not be able to comprehend the consistency of a man, who with one hand holds the scroll containing the Declaration of Independence and in the other grasps the lash, with which to drive his fellowmen, yet we submit. We peaceably submit to what politicians call rights of the South—but when that terrible curse, Slavery, advances, when supported and invited by northern doughfaces, it is pressing onward; when it threatens, in spite of all former contracts and compromises [Missouri Compromise, and the Compromise of 1850], to set its unholy foot on the free soil of the North, then gentlemen, we should and will arise in a body and will cry out! "So far, but no farther!"

The burden of argument, however, fell to plain Abraham Lincoln. "He had," says his late biographer, ex-Senator Albert J. Beveridge,[21] "prepared with uncommon thoroughness, even for

[19] Joseph B. Foraker, "Salmon P. Chase," in *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications,* XV, 311-40; Hart, Chase, 151-52.

[20] J. H. A. Lacher, "Francis A. Hoffmann of Illinois and Hans Buschbauer of Wisconsin" in *The Wisconsin Magazine of History,* XIII, 327-55.

[21] *Abraham Lincoln* (2 vols., New York, 1928), II, ch. 4.

him. He had studied the debates in Congress, and as we have seen, Douglas's speech in the Senate had been printed in pamphlet form as well as published in the newspapers. For weeks, Lincoln had spent toilsome hours in the State Library, searching trustworthy histories, analyzing the Census, mastering the facts, reviewing the literature of the subject. In his office he had written fragments on government and scraps of arguments against slavery, obviously trying to clarify his reasoning." Several editorials from his pen against the extension of slavery were written for the *Illinois Journal*.

Douglas gained headway outside Chicago. In the city the friendly Chicago *Times* was founded to aid him. Not until he went to Springfield to speak in his defensive campaign did Lincoln agree to debate with him. And there Lincoln delivered his "first great speech." The State Fair was in progress. Douglas's speech had been advertised for weeks. The rain on the evening set for his speech (October 3, 1854) drove him inside the Hall of the House of Representatives, where less than half of the crowd could wedge itself in. Douglas was greeted with loud cheers, and the Democratic editor forgot to jot down any notes on the speech. Anyway, it was declared to be an unanswerable speech.[22]

Lincoln spoke on the day following to a crowded hall. Handbills had been circulated to announce that he would answer Douglas. The day was sultry and "the air in the Hall was heavy when, at the appointed hour, the tall, thin awkward lawyer mounted the platform. He was in his shirt sleeves, without collar or stock, and his short, ill-fitting trousers added to the homeliness of his appearance." He had invited Douglas to "be present and make reply if he wished to do so, and the well-clad, well-groomed Senator was there."

Lincoln first cracked a few "Lincolnisms" before he began his prepared speech. "He began haltingly, in his thin, rasping voice, and Kentucky accent. But soon his hesitation disappeared, he became earnest, at times passionate. His hair was disordered, and as he proceeded, sweat poured down his face. Time and again the crowd burst into applause and when he closed the Hall rang with cheers."

[22] Beveridge, *Lincoln*, II, ch. 4.

His address contained his germinal ideas which he developed and reëxpressed until the time of the promulgation of his Emancipation Proclamation. He attacked the Kansas-Nebraska Act upon principle; no vituperation or abuse found its way into his cogent argument against it. Like the Blairs, he turned to Jefferson and the Ordinance of 1787 for the government's fundamental policy on the extension of slavery. He reviewed the sixty years of success of the Ordinance of 1787—in the great Northwest were millions of inhabitants who had become happy and prosperous. The Missouri Compromise, he said, had been canonized in the hearts of the people, "as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb." The Compromise of 1850 was honestly made and accepted as a finality. The two great parties had declared it so in 1852. Two years later Judge Douglas had caused the Missouri Compromise to become void; it was

> wrong in its direct effect, letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska, and wrong in its prospective principle, allowing it to spread to every other part of the wide world where men can be found inclined to take it.[23]

He did not blame the South for its situation. He would do as they did, probably, if he were there, but he hoped to see the institution destroyed by gradually deporting the slaves as they were freed. He would not free them and make them our social equals. Allow the South to have a Fugitive Slave law to guarantee her constitutional rights to her property and have the nation to promote gradual emancipation were his cardinal points. Popular sovereignty he denounced; it meant the spread of slavery, and "no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet-anchor of American republicanism." [24] Lincoln wanted the Missouri Compromise restored, a re-Declaration of Independence, and a dedication of men's lives for the cause of peace, freedom, and union.

The Republicans held a meeting in Springfield, at the call of Owen Lovejoy, on the night of the close of the meeting at which

[23] *Ibid.* [24] *Ibid.*

Lincoln delivered his "first great speech." He was not in sympathy with the movement, staunch Whig that he was, nor did he heartily join in it for many months afterward. He avoided unpleasant complications on the night of the organization of the Republican party in Illinois by hitching "his horse to his ramshackle buggy," and making off on its wobbly "wheels of political prudence" to remain away until the Republicans had gone home. His hat was in the ring for the United States Senate. Not until after Lyman Trumbull, the Free-Soil Democrat, was elected instead of Lincoln, did the latter see the expediency and advisability of the organization of a new party.

2

The disruption of the American party in 1855 over the question of slavery left its anti-slavery wing to drift into the rapidly growing Republican party. Able leaders like Samuel Bowles, editor of the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican,* and Henry Wilson announced their intentions of supporting the new party. Republican state organizations were perfected in practically every state before Congress met in December. The elections of 1855 were not disheartening, although they were disappointing to the Republicans. The degree of success attained by them is seen in the strength of the parties represented in Congress. The 33rd Congress was composed of 38 Democrats, 22 Whigs, and 2 Free-Soilers, in the Senate, and 159 Democrats, 71 Whigs, and 4 Free-Soilers, in the House. In the 34th Congress, which met December 3, 1855, there were 42 Democrats; *15 Republicans;* and 5 Americans in the Senate; and 79 Democrats; *117 anti-Nebraska men,* who were Whigs, Democrats and Free-Soilers; and 37 pro-slavery Whigs in the House.

In the early part of the month of June, 1855, Lewis Clephane and four others conceived the idea of forming a national Republican Association with headquarters in Washington, D. C. They met on June 19, pledged themselves to "The Republican Association of Washington, D. C.," and drew up a platform which included among others these significant planks: [25]

[25] Lewis Clephane, *Birth of the Republican Party* (Washington, 1889), 8-9.

First. That Congress possesses no power over the institution of slavery in the several States; but that, outside of the State jurisdiction, the constitutional power of the Federal Government should be exerted to secure *Life, Liberty,* and *Happiness* to all men, and therefore,

Second. There should be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for the punishment of crime, in any of the Territories of the United States.

Third. The people are the rightful source of all power; and all officers should, as far as practicable, be chosen by a direct vote of the people.

Across the margin of the pamphlet in which the pledge and platform was printed and signed by the members are these handwritten words: "In signing this constitution I do hereby promise not to divulge the names of its members." [26] Lewis Clephane had been buffeted and threatened too many times not to be cautious in this important venture. As business manager of the abolition journal, the *National Era,* since its foundation in 1847, he had faced angry mobs that wanted to take his life and to destroy his property. He was of Scottish descent, a practical reformer with a tenacious will, and a man of keen perception. He worked unceasingly in the background while he urged politicians to join his crusade against slavery.

Casting about for a president of the Republican Association of Washington, the members selected Francis P. Blair of Silver Spring as the man "who would give prominence and efficiency to the organization." Blair had left the "pure-and-simple" Democracy; he was the truest and ablest living representative of the old Jacksonian Democracy.[27] As the ex-editor of the *Globe,* he was widely known, and he represented the Free-Soil faction of the Democracy, a group whose aid was vitally necessary to the organization of a successful Republican party. Clephane and his friends interviewed Blair in his home. Republican Congressmen urged him to accept the leadership. He unhesitatingly refused the honor. He gave as his reason his age and his determination not actively to reënter politics. But those were not the only reasons for his declination. He was seriously considering the reorganization of the Democracy on Jeffersonian-Jacksonian prin-

[26] Walter Clephane, "Lewis Clephane: A Pioneer Washington Republican," in *Records* of the Columbia Historical Society, XXI, 270.

[27] Clephane, *Birth of the Republican Party, op. cit.*

ciples. He hoped to draw the dying Know-nothings of Free-Soil tendencies into his new organization. He realized that if he accepted the presidency of the Republican Association he would smother his own cherished plan. Finally, he agreed to allow the Republicans to elect him president of the Association with the understanding that he could immediately resign with a letter for publication. This letter of December 1, 1855, was published in all the prominent newspapers and printed in a pamphlet which was widely circulated by the Association.

Its influence can hardly be estimated. Clephane contends that it powerfully influenced the Democrats and caused many of them to "desert their old party ties and unite with the Republican Party." In the main, Blair concurred in the aims of the Association.

Seating himself at his small desk at the north window of his study, he wrote vigorously about his enemies and the issues before the people. He paused now and then to gaze across his garden, then under the spell of winter, and on toward the Capital, where he had spent many years in the defense of Jackson. They had been happy and profitable years, but they had ended at the hands of intriguing politicians. Love of country, of party, and of Jefferson and Jackson was balanced by fear of secession and recollections of political chicanery perpetrated by the Southerners in the campaigns of 1844 and 1848, and in the repeal of the two great compromises. He loved the Union above all things. Two great compromises had been reached to save it. They were, in his opinion, "the most important movements" which had "engaged the public mind since the Revolution." [28]

As to the extension of slavery, he was in accord with the expressed policy of the editors of the *National Era.* And so he wrote to the Association that

> The extension of slavery over the new Territories would prove fatal to their prosperity; but the greatest calamity to be apprehended from it is the destruction of the Confederacy, on which the welfare of the whole country reposes. Every conquest of this element of discord, which has so often threatened the dissolution of the Union, increases the danger. Every surrender of the Free States invites invasion.

[28] Pamphlet. *Letter of Francis P. Blair, Esq., to the Republican Association of Washington, D. C.,* 1855.

> The cause which your organization is intended to promote may well draw to its support men of all parties. Differences on questions of policy, of constitutional construction, of modes of administration, may well be merged, to unite men who believe that nothing but concert of action on the part of those who would arrest the spread of slavery can resist the power of the combination now embodied to make it embrace the Continent from ocean to ocean.
>
> The repealing clause of the Kansas Bill is predicted on the nullity of the clause in the Constitution which gives Congress the power "to make regulations respecting the Territories" of the United States. Yet nothing is clearer in the history of our Government than that this phrase, giving power to Congress "to make regulations respecting the Territories," was meant to give it the power to exclude slavery from them.

Then he traced the history of Jefferson to show the people that his views were in sympathy with those of Free-Soil Democrats of 1855. The founders of the Union, he said, intended to restrict slavery when they wrote into the Constitution a clause which gave Congress the right to pass laws to prevent the "migration or importation of slaves after 1808." Calhoun had introduced his doctrine that "every citizen has an inalienable right to move into any of the Territories with his property, of whatever kind or description" when the Mexican territories were added to our domain. It unsettled the policy of the nation. Against the good judgment of Benton, Clay, and Webster, squatter sovereignty was imposed upon the country by Douglas and Cass. To accept it was to adopt a phrase in Calhoun's doctrine of nullification, and to deny Congress the right to exercise its constitutional power to restrict slavery in the Territories.

His confidence in the people remained unshaken. Those who had bartered the rights of the masses should beware. "It is the glory of our Republic that its Democracy springs up from the soil and flourishes in the fresh air of our wide-spread country; and that its rich harvest, imparting health, strength, and spirit to our whole system, is gathered annually at the polls. The Democracy which is bred in caucuses and Cabinets is a sort of hot-bed species —a delicacy suited to the taste of epicurean politicians, whose appetites are their principles." The vengeance of the public, he believed, was inexorable; "Democracy does not reside in the organization of intriguers, but in the mass of the people."

Blair's letter was circularized with an appeal to Republicans to organize clubs, however small in number, throughout the Union. "Platform principles and a simple Constitution and By-laws" were franked by Senators and Congressmen to their constituents. Speeches delivered by Republicans in Congress were published by thousands of copies and franked over the country. The office of the *National Era* was kept busy publishing campaign literature free of charge to the youthful organization. A German employee of that journal translated political documents into the German language. Frank Blair saw that thousands of them were distributed in the West.

Frank was in a predicament in Missouri. He owed the allegiance of family friendship to Benton, whose influence was no longer patent. They could not agree on the Wilmot Proviso. Frank and Gratz Brown left no stone unturned to return Benton to Congress, but Atchison was strong enough to prevent their success. They, with Rollins, controlled the state legislature and won the title of "Black Republicans." Frank encouraged Republicanism in a quiet way although he dared not publicly avow that faith. His "Kentucky Clique," as his enemies called his following, were forced to wear the mask of Democracy to save themselves politically. He wrote to James M. Stone [29] in answer to a letter concerning the candidacy of Benton for the presidency in 1856, that he believed Benton could be elected if his friends brought him forward in the proper manner. Benton would not talk of the matter, nor allow Frank to talk to him about it. Benton claimed that the people should seek the man, and not the man seek the office. Frank wrote that he had thought the best way to nominate Benton "was to hold meetings in every state, county, city & town & village & give him a direct nomination from the people themselves upon the platform which he has built for himself in his 30 years of public service. He will accept no other platform." Anyway, to make a platform, he thought, would be to drive off votes. He proposed to offer the people a *man*. They were "tired of imbecile rogues like our present rulers."

During the last days of December, 1855, the elder Blair entertained at Silver Spring a party of friends including Chase, Dr.

[29] Gundlach MSS., in the Missouri Historical Society Collections, St. Louis, Missouri. Letter is dated "1855."

Bailey of the *National Era,* Sumner, Nathaniel P. Banks, and Preston King. Blair's object in having his political friends at his home was to arrange for the organization of the anti-Nebraska Democrats and plan for a convention to be held by them and the Know-nothings at the same time in Pittsburgh or Cincinnati. Seward courteously refused to be present at the meeting, excusing his absence on the ground that he never took part in "plans or schemes for political action," but he hurriedly confessed to Thurlow Weed that he wished to keep free of entanglements with Know-nothingism.[80] King later called on Seward at Blair's request and told him that "measures were in progress to have a convention called from Ohio" to nominate a ticket, half Republican and half Know-nothing. Blair favored John C. Frémont or Chase for a presidential nominee of the allied parties. The movement for an Independent Democrat party, or for an alliance of all free-soil men independent of the Republicans, either of which the Blairs really desired, died aborning. It was swallowed by the Republicans, upon whose band wagon the Blairs soon found themselves the leading trumpeters.

On January 17, 1856, the Republicans sent forth appeals to organize for the campaign of 1856. The organization of local clubs were urged north of Mason and Dixon's line. A call was prepared at Washington and signed by five state chairmen of as many Republican committees who invited the Republicans of the Union to go to Pittsburgh, on February 22, 1856, purposely to perfect a national organization and provide for a national convention of the Republican party on some subsequent day to choose candidates for the party.

Clephane realized that the personnel of the Pittsburgh meeting would largely determine the success of the party. He knew that men like Lyman Trumbull, Horace Greeley, Norman B. Judd, John M. Palmer, Nathaniel Banks, S. P. Chase, Charles Sumner, David Wilmot, Joshua Giddings, and John A. King were disgusted with the old organizations. The Southern Whigs were going over to the Americans, to the disgust of the Northern Americans, who were turning to the Republicans. Reports of

[80] Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington 1846-1861. As Senator and Secretary of State* (New York, 1891), 264. Seward to Weed, Dec. 31, 1855.

the Bloomington convention of June 4, 1856, in Illinois, showed that Whigs, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democrats, Republicans, and Americans were present. The convention chose Abraham Lincoln as a presidential elector. It refused to use the term Republican, so much hated had Douglas made the term "Black Republican." The platform, however, demanded a return to the principles of Washington and Jefferson. It declared that Congress had the right to prohibit slavery in the territories; that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was foolish and wrong, and that to force slavery on Kansas was a tyrannous denial of the right of self-government.

Though the Illinois convention followed the Pittsburgh meeting, it indicated political sentiment in many important areas in which the new party must draw its strength. Clephane and his friends sought to have the elder Blair present at Pittsburgh to offset fear and hesitation on the part of Jacksonian Democrats in joining the new Republican party. The former, as Secretary of the Association at Washington, begged Blair to attend the meeting as a delegate. Blair refused to do it. He was hanging on to the forlorn hope that he could yet succeed in the amalgamation of outside factions with the Free-Soil Democrats. His plans were set forth in a letter to Van Buren in which he wrote: [31]

> What a glorious consummation our chiefs Cass, Douglas, Pierce, Atchison, with the help of old Buck's Pennsylvania forces & Calhoun's. Nullifiers have worked out of our democratic organization against all the precedents and principles of democracy. It is a problem with me whether honest men should surrender honest principles & precedents established by honest patriots, in submission to a rotten organization composed & managed altogether by rotten men—nor is it altogether clear that it would be wise to fall under the reign of another organization—I have proposed to the supporters of our principles under the flag of [illegible] that they call a meeting after the speaker's election, however it goes, to invite a mass meeting of all the principal men of our party (who would restore the compromises & the pacification, they brought with them) to encounter face to face at Cincinnati pseudo Democracy represented by the office holding & seeking gang— I have no doubt we could get together a stronger body of better known Democrats than they could muster on the other side.
>
> In addition I would have the Republicans to call their convention

[31] Van Buren MSS. Jan. 25, 1856.

at the same time & place & the Know Nothings who hold the Repeal of the Nebraska Act the paramount issue in the next campaign & then through diplomatic Committees arrange an alliance for the Battle for the Presidency . . . . we would go to the country to preach a crusade against Atchison & his Civil War for slavery— Those I have talked with seem to approve——

As to candidates he believed Benton and Houston had "outgenerated themselves." He was thinking of another! "I think of Fremont," he wrote, "as a *new man*—he is brave, firm, has a history of romantic heroism—has rendered services as a man of honor—always Democratic & has no bad political connections . . . no tail of hungry corrupt hangers on like Buchanan who will I think be the Nullifying Candidate." He acknowledged that his views were speculative, but he hoped for a focus of public opinion upon the real issues.

Van Buren answered Blair within ten days of the receipt of his letter.[32] He agreed that a blight had fallen on their party, but, nevertheless, his party loyalty caused him to regard with apprehension Blair's proposal to array himself against it with its old enemies. If the Democracy must die, he hoped that its death would not come at the hands of an organization with the name of Blair emblazoned upon its roll. The old Democracy had seen evil days and rallied; it would "do so again & again until the end of the chapter." No man could do more for it as a leader than Blair. But Van Buren's influence with Blair was fast waning.

Clephane now resorted to a little strategy to secure the attendance of Blair at Pittsburgh. He wrote to some Free-Soil Quakers in Baltimore, begging them to organize a Republican club at once, choose Blair as their delegate to Pittsburgh, and notify him of their selection. This bit of diplomacy was carried out just when Blair was wavering. Friends approached him on the proposition of being the head of a press that would be strongly anti-administration. The entreating Van Buren prevented him from accepting the editorship of what would have been a Republican press. Another friend, however, had informed him of "the most respectable meeting he ever witnessed" which had met in Baltimore, adopted the principles set forth in his letter to the

[32] Blair MSS. Feb. 4, May 21, 1856.

Republican Association, and had chosen him as their only delegate to represent them at Pittsburgh, on February 22. "The meeting was held in Baltimore," explained the unsuspecting Blair, "without prompting from this [Washington] quarter & without any knowledge of it on my part." He immediately sent his son-in-law, S. P. Lee, to Baltimore to ascertain who those men were —men who could meet in a "slave City to oppose the slave managers in Congress— If on his return," he wrote to Van Buren, "I find that I can be supported by men of my own Democratic creed in that City, in urging my views on the Councils of those organizing to oppose the wrongs perpetrated & perpetuating by Pierce" and the Nullifiers, "I think I will go to Pittsburg for the purpose. . . . I think that Nelson's signal, now that the Union is in actual danger, should be hoisted by us all—'Our Country expects every man to do his duty' "—to prevent Civil War into which it was gradually being pushed. "I still cherish my idea," he continued, "of a mass meeting of Democrats & all others who will join them at Cincinnati to take from the Doughfaces the name they use as Imposters— We must have an exalted Democrat nominated who will make the renegade opponent ashamed to show his face of Dough."

And so he decided to go to the Pittsburgh convention. Less than a week remained in which to make preparations. He seated himself at the little mahogany desk at the north window to set forth on paper the principles for which he stood. The spirit of the old editor of the *Globe* returned. In a few minutes the Jacksonian document was scribbled, corrected, and folded. It was to be the memorial of the slave state of Maryland to the Pittsburgh convention. Frank had recently made a hurried trip from St. Louis to Silver Spring to formulate his plans for the coming election. The time had come for action.

The twentieth of February found Blair enroute to Pittsburgh. Delegates from sixteen free and eight slave states were gathering there. They were determined men who believed that democracy should be made a reality. In the evening a number of the delegates met in the Monongahela Hotel to consult on the preliminary organization of the convention. The meeting was ill advised; it was impossible to harmonize the discordant party interests of

this small group of Democrats, Know-nothings, Abolitionists, Whigs, and Free-Soilers, each striving for ascendancy. The meeting broke up with ill feeling. Clephane and Stone worked all night in getting together a committee composed of one man from each state represented to meet at eight o'clock the next morning. Present at this committee meeting were Clephane, Owen Lovejoy of Illinois, Dennison of Ohio, Stone of Boston, Bingham of Michigan, Paulison of New Jersey, and Morgan of New York. Plans for the organization of the convention were at last perfected.

Clephane proposed Blair's name to the committee for president of the convention to the astonishment of its members, for they were unaware of his presence and sympathy. They unanimously agreed that he should be the man and sent Clephane to obtain his acceptance. After much hesitancy he agreed to act as president if he were elected by the free conference that day. Delegates continued to come in greater numbers than was expected. Greeley was there to report the proceedings for the *Tribune,* and he predicted before the conference met that Blair would be chosen president.

The conference was largely attended; Lieutenant-Governor Bingham of Michigan presided. Owen Lovejoy opened the conference with a prayer in which he asked God to enlighten the mind of President Pierce and "turn him from his evil ways." A suppressed murmur of applause ran through the audience after his prayer. Joshua Giddings received a tumultuous invitation to speak. He threw the convention into uproarious laughter and turned it over to Lovejoy, who begged them to be very cautious in their movements. Enthusiasm mounted. Speakers were not unwilling to entertain the delegates who crowded into Lafayette Hall. Preston King, David Wilmot, George Julian, and others took their turn in entertaining the convention. An Associated Press dispatch of the day announced that the "convention will be one of the most important ever held here." At the end of the day Greeley telegraphed to the *Tribune:* "All is enthusiasm and harmony." John A. King, son of Rufus King, the staunch old Federalist, was elected president *pro tem.,* and Blair, Jacksonian

Democrat, was elected permanent president.[33] The announcement by Simeon Draper of New York that Francis P. Blair of Maryland was elected permanent president of the convention created a scene, telegraphed Greeley, that was "exciting beyond description." The noise of huzzas was deafening when Preston King and Jacob Brinkerhoff led Blair to the chair, and "cheers went forth and handkerchiefs were waved for some minutes after he took his seat as presiding officer."

Somewhat disconcerted and abashed by the enthusiastic welcome, Blair explained that he was no orator, and that "it was a remarkable fact that this was the first speech he had ever been called on to make." He explained that he represented respectable men of character and wealth of Baltimore for whom he was honored to present a Southern platform in the form of an address entitled: "The Republicans of Maryland to the Republicans of the Union," which he then drew from his pocket. He told the delegates that "the people of the South had been made to believe that the object of the Republican party solely was the abolition of Slavery," but, he assured them, "when it is understood that it is to prevent Nullification at the North, a different feeling will prevail among the Southern people." Cries came from all parts of the floor for him to read his address; others cried out, "Wait till the organization is completed," and Blair modestly thanked them again for the honor bestowed upon him, and sat down.[34]

His address was read at the evening session. It was too conservative to be adopted as a platform, although its arraignment of the Southern Democracy and Pierce's administration made a deep impression on the members of the convention. He would warn slave-owners not to take their slaves into territory wherein the sovereign power interdicted it. He begged that every issue be merged in the restoration of the Compromise; and he proposed that all parties meet in a convention to nominate men who would stand for the non-extension of slavery. The address was received

[33] George Washington Julian, *Political Recollections 1840-1872* (Chicago, 1884), 147-48; Green Berry Raum, *History of Illinois Republicanism with Biographies of Its Founders and Supporters* (Chicago, 1900), 26; Curtis, *The Republican Party,* 250-51; Schouler, V, 350.

[34] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Feb. 26, 1856; Julian, *Recollections,* 147-48.

as an expression of the sentiment of the Southerners and ordered to be printed.

It must be remembered that Blair's address had been written on a slave plantation of a Free-Soil Democrat. Its author had not brought himself to declare publicly for the Republican party when it was written. At Pittsburgh he found that, once the convention got under way, the sentiment was purely Republican. As chairman of the convention he heard men express themselves quite freely. Lovejoy said "he was willing to go either as a captain or private" and welter in blood rather than see Kansas in the hands of drunken ruffians of the government. Charles Kremlin of Ohio wanted the people to rebuke the "insolence of an accidental President [Pierce]." Greeley said the "Federal forces are in the hands of our implacable enemies"; he, however, advised the Republicans to be cautious. In the midst of an outpouring of free-soilism on the "First Day" came the cheering news by telegraph from Philadelphia, where the American party was in convention: "The American Party are no longer united. Raise the Republican banner! Let there be no further extension of Slavery! The Americans are with you!" This news was greeted with tremendous applause. Mr. Kremlin followed it with a stirring speech in which he cried out that there should be "a party that knows no North, no South, no East, no West, but Freedom everywhere." Blair found himself caught up by the enthusiasm and spirit of the convention. He willingly served on the Committee on Resolutions and Address, and he readily accepted a place in the National Executive Committee.

Since the National Republican party had launched itself on Washington's Birthday, it was fitting that the National Executive Committee was empowered to call a National Republican Convention to meet in Philadelphia to choose nominees for the party on June 17, the anniversary of Bunker Hill. That done, many of the delegates accepted an invitation to attend the mass meeting which was held on the night of February 23, to aid the emigration of free-soilers to Kansas. Horace Greeley, in his address before the meeting, urged all men who wished to hew out an honest living to go settle in Kansas. A Mr. Wood of Kansas followed with news hot from bleeding Kansas where ten thousand Mis-

sourians led by Atchison and others made life a thrilling one. Mr. Chandler thought they could not send too many of Sharp's rifles as peacemakers. And so the convention that organized the Republican party broke up in a grand tirade on the Missourians in Kansas.[35]

Blair, the lion among the delegates, as Schouler calls him, hurried to Silver Spring committed to Republicanism. His influence as chairman and as a member of the Committee on Resolutions at the convention had been used for moderation. His masterly political ability exercised in his incisive, unimpassioned manner served as a happy balance between the various factions represented. He represented the plantation Free-Soil Democracy. One author claims that his "ability, tact and discretion prevented a complete fiasco."[36] It is important that he had found a way to be democratic without bearing the party name of Democrat.

Soon after Blair returned to Silver Spring, the Republican National Committee, of which he was a member, met in Washington (March 27, 1856) to issue a call for the nominating convention. The committee labored two days on the wording of the call. Blair's skillful pen, no doubt, had much to do with its final form. It was carefully constructed to attract as many of the discordant elements as possible. Addressed to the people of the United States, it ran as follows: "The People of the United States, without regard to past political differences or divisions, who are opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, to the policy of the present Administration, to the extension of Slavery into the Territories, in favor of the admission of Kansas as a free State, and of restoring the action of the Federal Government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson, are invited by the National Committee" to send delegates to Philadelphia to nominate candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States.

His next move was to write a letter to the Republicans who were planning to hold a public meeting in New York City, April 29. The letter, dated April 26, 1856, was later published in full in the New York *Evening Post*. Blair protested against the Southern Democracy then in power in Washington on the ground that it

[35] C. W. Johnson, *Republican Conventions*, 12-13.
[36] Henry H. Smith, *All Republican Conventions Since 1856* (Washington, 1896).

was not the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian-Van Buren Democracy. He adroitly entitled his letter: "A Voice from the Grave of Jackson!" A storm of denunciation came from the loyal Democratic press intended everlastingly to damn him. The daily Washington *Union,* the administration organ, poured upon his head its vials of scorn and wrath. It claimed that old age was manifesting itself in "garrulity and egotism." He was filled with malice, revenge, and envy, because he had been deposed as the editor of the erstwhile *Globe.* Now, said the *Union,* he had a "remnant of mind" left which he devoted to the defamation of the reputations of the "living and the dead"—all for the cause of the worst enemies of the country—Black Republicans.

The letter was published and distributed widely in the form of a campaign document. Its influence was tremendous. "Let no person lay down the *Evening Post* today," wrote the editors, "without first carefully reading the extraordinary revelations contained in the letter of Mr. Blair. . . . It constitutes one of the most interesting and pregnant chapters in the political history of our country. . . . No unprejudiced American can peruse them, with Mr. Blair's exegesis, without feeling that, for the past eight or ten years, the spirit, and some of the very men, against whose disunion projects General Jackson was compelled to level his executive thunders, have been gradually acquiring an absolute ascendancy in the federal government, and that at this moment it is under the control of a spirit of slavery propagandism, more desperate and more lawless than Mr. Calhoun ever hoped or imagined in his craziest intervals." [87]

In the letter Blair first expressed his gratitude to the Republicans for their invitation to him to unite with them against the "sinister designs of the nullifiers of the South." He believed, he said, that the nullifiers were more formidable than ever, because they were protected by the Pierce administration—an administration that had betrayed the confidence of Jacksonian Democrats. He mistakenly labored under the older accepted view that Calhoun led Carolina into opposition to the governmental policy on the tariff, but he correctly stated that Calhoun labored hard to consolidate the South with Carolina as the leader in nullification.

[87] New York *Evening Post,* May 2, 1856.

Failing in that, continued Blair, Calhoun turned the nature of the contest into one of pro-slavery versus anti-slavery. He assumed that Calhoun with his coadjutors agitated the slavery issue to consolidate the South in order that his consuming ambition to be President of the United States, or of a Confederacy, might be realized. He and his co-workers popularized abolitionism by convoking sectional conventions of protest, by demanding that abolition petitions be denied a hearing in Congress, by demanding that abolition literature be denied transmission in the mails in the South, and finally, in a last effort, by linking slavery with expansion. "The conquest of new dominions for slavery touched that fibre in the heart, which, unhappily for the peace of mankind, is too much alive in every bosom. Mr. Calhoun, as the head of Mr. Tyler's Administration, (a place which was opened to him by the hand of death), urged the annexation of Texas, a field to the South for the propagation of Slavery, and opening its way to indefinite extension towards the West." [88]

"The annexation of Texas produced the war with Mexico, which fully developed the ambition of the slave-holding interest for extended dominion." Not satisfied with Texas, slave interests demanded the Southwest and California as slave territory under threat of disunion. To gain those ends, he "made the slaveholders a perfect Southern phalanx, by making it manifest that thorough concert of action among them was essential to achieve their contemplated conquest." Secondly, he gained the control of Tyler's and Polk's administrations "through a combination of personal interests." His friends usurped the leadership of the Democracy, ousted Jackson's friends, disestablished the *Globe,* and forced Northern candidates in the party to kneel to them to gain support for the presidency. Polk was nominated at Baltimore in 1844 because Calhoun's friends refused to accept Van Buren. It would be the same in Cincinnati in 1856. Blair pointed out that Senator Butler of South Carolina, Calhoun's intimate friend and hater of Northern Democracy, David R. Atchison, Toombs of Georgia, Yulee of Florida, devout worshiper of Calhoun, P. Soulé of Ostend Manifesto fame, Quitman of Mississippi, a secessionist of the rankest sort, Mason of Virginia, *et al.,* were in control of

[88] Blair, *A Voice from the Grave of Jackson!,* Apr. 26, 1856.

the Southern Democracy. They were the type of nullifiers whom Jackson denounced as those who were not of the "proper Democracy." They had gained control of Polk's administration, of Tyler's, and had at last irretrievably split the Democracy.

Blair's explanation of how he was ousted as editor of the *Globe* was so near the truth that it especially provoked the severest denunciation from Southern newspapers. He did not have all of the facts actually to prove the whole of his surmises, but the conspirators squirmed uncomfortably under his terrific attack. Buchanan attempted to assume a nonchalant manner, but his letter to Horatio King concerning the fifty thousand dollars of government money which he had recommended to be deposited with Simon Cameron at Middleton, Pennsylvania, and which was later used to buy the *Globe,* betrayed his uneasiness.[39] The complicity of Polk and Calhoun's friends was established beyond doubt. The earnest and vehement protestations of the dying Jackson against the conspiracy to disestablish the *Globe* now struck the camp of true Jacksonians with great force. Blair was denounced as a traitor to his party for publishing them. It was pointed out that his associates in 1856 were very largely composed of those who had warred on Jackson from 1830 to 1837. He was accused of being a clinging ivy that had entwined itself about the sturdy oak (Jackson) and sucked nutriment from its power. The nullifiers evidently were on the defensive.

The dying Jackson had feebly taken up his pen to write to Blair about them in 1845:[40]

> I have used my voice to prevent that evil to him [Mr. Polk] and the Democratic party. I am too unwell to write much to-day. I look to a split in the Democratic ranks, which I will sorely regret, and which might have been so easily avoided. I am very sick, and must close. [He lay propped up with pillows, legs swollen as large as his body, panting for breath, dying of dropsy.]

Blair closed his letter with the exclamation: "What a revolution in the course of the first half century has Slavery wrought, in the principles that gave birth to our Republic! Freedom was the basis of that Republic. It is now insisted that the Constitution

[39] Moore, *The Works of James Buchanan,* XI, 420.
[40] Blair, *A Voice from the Grave of Jackson!*

carries the principle of bondage wherever its flag makes an acquisition."

"Against this spurious Democracy, which has thus perfected its system in the Kansas Act, and made it their test, I, as a Democrat of the Jefferson, Jackson, and Van Buren school, enter my protest."

The Detroit *Free Press,* Cass's organ, pronounced the designs of Blair in publishing his letter as detestable. The Washington *Union* sneered at his mental faculties, basing its reasons on his letter and his age. John Bigelow defended him thus: "Mr. Blair has now come forward, as an honest man and a friend of his country, who knows that his voice is yet potential in party controversies, should come forward, when great interests are at stake, where the honor of the country and the welfare of posterity are concerned." Probably the most important single use of the letter was made by Benjamin F. Hall in the book which he wrote for the presidential campaign.

There was little difference of opinion within the Blair family as to their right to reorganize the Democratic groups. But to the outside world it appeared that a rift between the father and sons existed. Frank was unalterably opposed to Pierce. On January 1, 1856, he wrote to Montgomery that

> The next thing for which I earnestly pray, after the health and happiness of those I love, is that the plagues of Egypt may descend upon Pierce & Co & that the next year may see them all clothed in sackcloth with an edging of ashes.

John Van Buren, early in March, sent his father a copy of the *Union,* in which was a letter from the *Times* written by Frank Blair. "It will be seen that Frank disavows his father"—wrote "Prince John." Montgomery had already done so, thought he, and Benton had repudiated Horace Greeley. He had never known two men like Blair and Benton who "had less power of combination & political skill." In his estimation it was stupid for Blair to bolt the party three months before it began its work for the coming campaign, "but in addition to assail the party, & draw the fire from its works upon you (Van Buren) was to put one's self where a powder monkey could kill Jackson himself." [41]

[41] Van Buren MSS. John to his father, Mar. 10, 1856.

The outward appearance of a break between the father and his sons was caused by the complicated political situation in Missouri. Benton had given Frank cause to believe that he would not support the candidate of the Southern wing of the Democracy for President. Frank had run the dangerous chance of ruining his future in politics in Missouri by giving Benton his unstinted support in 1850, 1852, and in 1854. Benton had been so long absent from the state that it had grown away from him. It was folly for him to run in 1856. He decided, against Frank's advice, to run for governor of Missouri, on the "Benton Democracy" ticket, and to support the nominee at Cincinnati regardless of who he might be. Such action placed Frank, who was at heart a Republican, in a precarious position. He intended to run for Congress, but under the circumstances it was difficult to decide upon the ticket. The Jefferson City *Examiner,* which was the organ of the "Fayette Clique," classed him as an abolitionist and a "Black Republican." The slavocracy labored hard to read him out of its party to defeat him in St. Louis, where he would have to run for Congress.[42]

Blair was too adroit a politician to be so easily set aside. Immediately after the rout of the Know-nothings in the state elections in Missouri, he had a secret conference with James S. Rollins at which he proposed that the Know-nothings unite with the Republicans on a Benton man for governor. Rollins did not believe the Know-nothings could be persuaded to do it. Blair then proposed to support Rollins, or George R. Smith of Sedalia, if the Know-nothings would nominate either one of them for governor. Rollins and Smith began at once to feel out the situation in the state.[43] Before these estimable leaders of the Americans could unite on a man, Benton had informed Blair that he would make the race for governor on his own ticket. Blair called a state nominating convention of the Blair-Benton Democrats to meet in the halls of the State Capitol on the same day that the Atchison Democrats held their convention. The "Fayette Clique" knew that this move of Blair was a premeditated attempt to overthrow

[42] Jefferson City *Examiner,* Feb. 23, Apr. 5, 1856.

[43] Samuel B. Harding, *Life of George R. Smith, Founder of Sedalia, Mo.* (Sedalia, 1904), 244.

their wing of the Democracy. They begged the Democrats to have nothing to do with his convention. He, nevertheless, had about fifty delegates present when his "Blair Convention" met on April 21. He loyally had Benton nominated for governor, although he wanted him openly to join the Republicans. On that proposition the old war-horse stubbornly refused to budge an inch. In this predicament Frank decided to oppose any endorsement of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and any denunciation of "Black Republicanism." He, consequently, spoke against resolutions involving such an endorsement on the floor of the convention. Rather, he said, "ought we not to call to account the men who have deluged the land with civil strife? Ought we not to call to account the perjured Franklin Pierce for such conduct in this affair [Kansas]?" He favored the re-adoption of the resolutions of the party in 1852. He denounced Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, and the President for destroying the chance of Missouri to get the Pacific Railroad simply to please the slaveholders in the South.

The "Blair Convention" agreed on the following platform:

1. They re-affirmed their faith in the Missouri Compromise, as a solution to the slavery question in the territories.
2. They denounced Know-nothingism as dangerous to the liberties of the country.
3. They favored internal improvements.
4. They promised to acquiesce in the Kansas-Nebraska Act if its principles were "fairly and honestly" carried out.
5. They denounced abolitionism, nullification, secession, and disunion.

An attempt to pass a resolution endorsing James Buchanan for the nomination for the presidency failed upon adjournment to go to dinner.[44]

Frank's strength was enough to alarm the slave interests. His ticket in St. Louis was elected early in the spring by a majority of about two thousand votes. His candidate for mayor, whom he had elected, refused to announce his support of the nominee at the forthcoming convention in Cincinnati. The *Examiner* asked

[44] Jefferson City *Examiner*, Apr. 26; May 2, 1856.

Frank to bolt outright. It accused him of making a bargain with the Know-nothings, promising them, if they nominated James S. Rollins, the Benton-Blair men would vote for him for governor."[45]

The anti-Benton Democrats, or the "Fayette Clique," nominated Trusten Polk (later expelled from the Senate as a traitor) in a convention outwardly bubbling with enthusiasm, but inwardly raging at the Blair-Benton men. The excitement brought out the largest number of delegates which the party had witnessed on a similar occasion in the state. The delegates lauded the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, declared for the maintenance of a strict Fugitive Slave Law, and pledged their Democracy to support the nominees at Cincinnati. The Whigs in a forlorn hope nominated Robert C. Ewing for governor of the state. The campaign issues were soon restricted to the Jackson-Napton Resolutions, which had been the issue in two former state elections. Frank's opponent for Congress was a "highly respected Democrat," but no match for him in a political battle.

At this juncture all eyes were turned toward Cincinnati, where the Democratic National Convention was to convene June 2. Missouri sent two sets of delegates: those representing the old Calhoun-"Fayette Clique" Democracy, and those chosen by the Blair-Benton Democracy. Among the former were James S. Green and John S. Phelps; of the Blair delegation were B. Gratz Brown, Barton Able, George Smith, and Thomas L. Price, all of whom were intimate friends of Frank Blair.[46]

The convention opened with factional feeling running high.[47] A clash over the two delegations each of Missouri and New York arose soon after the convention convened. The Blair delegates were denied admission by the door-keepers, whereupon they armed themselves with clubs, knocked the door-keepers down, and entered anyway. But the Southerners were in control of the convention. They seated the regular Democracy after wasting many hours in heated discussion. Three hundred press agents and their friends clamored for seats in the gallery when old Colonel Samuel Medary of Ohio ascended the platform as tempo-

[45] *Ibid.*, May 2, 17, 1856.

[46] *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention Held in Cincinnati,* June 2-6, 1856.

[47] Frank R. Kent, *The Democrat Party, A History* (New York, 1928), 175.

rary chairman. Several more hours were wasted in trying to determine how the gallery seats should be divided among the visitors. Out among the delegates and on the platform sat Horatio Seymour of New York; John B. Floyd of Virginia; F. W. Pickens of South Carolina, former tool of Calhoun who helped to force Blair out of the *Globe* office; P. Soulé of Louisiana; Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio; D. L. Yulee of Florida; J. Knox Walker, another of those who had helped to oust Blair as editor of the *Globe;* John C. Breckinridge, cousin of the Blairs; Wm. Preston of Kentucky, old-time Whig and a distant relative of the Blairs; James A. Seddon; Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts; Charles Levi Woodbury, junior, brother-in-law of Montgomery Blair; James A. Bayard of Delaware, chairman of the Committee on Credentials; and John E. Ward of Georgia, who was elected permanent chairman of the convention.[48]

On the third day resolutions were introduced, severally discussed, and not all adopted until after a nominee for President of the United States was chosen. They almost unanimously decided that the "Federal Government is one of limited power, derived solely from the Constitution"; that the national government has no constitutional right "to carry on a general system of internal improvements"; that the government should not foster one industry at the expense of another; that a national bank should not be reëstablished; and that the Know-nothings were wrong in their attacks on the Catholics and the foreign-born in the United States. On the question of slavery they declared that Congress had no power under the Constitution to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several states, and that the efforts of abolitionists to influence Congress were "calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences"; that the Democracy would abide by the Compromise of 1850 and faithfully execute the Fugitive Slave law; that they would be guided by the principles of the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, and carry out the Kansas-Nebraska Act as a sound and safe solution of the slavery question; that the development of our power and commerce on the high seas required "free seas and progressive free trade throughout the world," and that our primary interests

[48] *Official Proceedings.*

in the Gulf of Mexico and abroad demanded a strict observance of the Monroe Doctrine. After much heated argument it was voted to recommend military and post roads to the Pacific.

In the selection of a nominee the convention faced a difficult problem. Buchanan was easily the favorite of the Northern Democrats present. Douglas had increased his hold on the Democracy through his advocacy of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The Northern delegates were deeply agitated over the prospect of a dark horse being nominated instead of Buchanan. The nearer the time for the convention approached the less chance Pierce had for renomination. After the fifteenth ballot had been taken with much wrangling, Preston of Kentucky rose to put an end to the useless contest by the transfer of the vote of Kentucky from Douglas to Buchanan. Cries of "No, no!" "Don't withdraw!" from the delegates were interrupted by W. A. Henderson of Illinois, who, while a death-like silence reigned, announced that he had a telegram from Stephen A. Douglas to read. Douglas withdrew his name for the sake of harmony in the party. Apologies were made to Douglas by the various state delegations, some of which spoke of his future chances, as they transferred their votes to elect on the seventeenth ballot "the ripe, able and accomplished statesman of Pennsylvania." John C. Breckinridge, an uncompromising state-rights man, was nominated for Vice-President. Preston was invited to speak as an old Whig to the convention. In spite of his age and feebleness he thrilled the convention with a tirade against "treasonable dogmas" of "Black Republicans." Tremendous cheering relieved the delegates of some of their high tension, and soon they were on their way home to fight for "the Sage of Wheatland."

A majority of the Democratic presses over the country accepted the nominations with considerable satisfaction. The newly organized *Atlas & Argus* of Albany, New York, edited by William Cassidy, declared that "no more auspicious nomination could have been made for the Democracy and the Union." One hundred guns in Albany were fired in a salute upon the reception of the news of the nominations.[49] The New York *Sun* claimed

[49] The *Atlas & Argus*, June 7, 1856.

the honor of first suggesting Buchanan, and the New York *Journal of Commerce* said it was a "guarantee for domestic quiet *on the basis of the Constitution.*" The barometer of the stock market pointed to confidence and calm in the country. Cassidy predicted that the Hards and Softs would unite against the Know-nothings and Black Republicans.

The announcement of Cassidy that he would endeavor to unite the Democrats in New York on Buchanan indicated what the Van Burens would do. Try as he would, Blair could not swing them into the Republican fold. Van Buren wrote to Blair on the subject that [50]

> My letter to you before you went to Pittsburg intended to dissuade [you] from that step, must have satisfied you that the stand you have felt it your duty to take must produce a change in our Party Relations, so far at least, as I have any thing to do with Parties. But I must be sorry to think it necessary to assure you that such a condition cannot in the slightest degree shake my faith in the purity or integrity of your character. I know, as well as any such thing can be known, that you are incapable of taking any stand in politics, or any thing else, which you do not at least believe to be right, & in which you do not design to promote the public good. You were grievously treated by the Representatives of a Party which you had served with scrupulous fidelity and unsurpassed effect, & although I do not think you are taking the wisest course to redress yourself no ungenerous mind can fail to recognize your perfect right to take any which your judgment & conscience approve. But of one thing be certain that my personal attachments to Mrs. Blair & yourself & to all your family are unalterable.

Blair had made his decision. He would risk the loss of party friendship of men with whom he had associated for a lifetime if it were necessary for the reorganization of his party. He had received his command from the dying Jackson, and he alone proposed to interpret it. He would sacrifice, if necessary, his most admired and beloved son, Frank, the boy whom the whole Blair family hoped to see President of the United States. He joined the Republican ranks against the warnings of his old partner, Rives, against the stern remonstrances of Benton, and against the advice of many warm friends and relatives in the Democratic party.

[50] Blair MSS. May 21, 1856.

Cassidy told him that he could not take ten Democrats in Maryland into the Republican camp. The Republicans welcome you, said Cassidy in substance, and elect you president of their convention, only because you have the scent of Jackson on your garments. They listen to your talk of Frémont because he may attract Democrats because he is Benton's son-in-law. "They praise the dead *Jackson,* after twenty years of maledictions and opprobrium; and they would worship his robes and kiss the hem of his garments, if they thought that good omens would flow from it. . . . They would hate him as they hate his creed" if he were living. "He would have spurned them from his presence."

The decision once made, Blair turned his attention to the selection of a candidate for his party. As early as January, 1856, he had seriously considered Frémont as a likely candidate.[51] The Democrats had made overtures to Frémont in 1855, but the Pathfinder could not lend his name to the party that demanded of him the endorsement of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[52] Republicans of discernment soon discovered that the name of Frémont aroused not only friendly interest, but enthusiasm when it was mentioned in connection with the presidency. Nathaniel P. Banks, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Free-Soil Democrat, now a Republican, and Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, ex-chairman of a free-soil convention in 1852, readily decided that Frémont would make a successful nominee. Frémont was in the East on business in the winter of 1855-56. A friend advised him to live in New York City for a while, and he took rooms at the Metropolitan Hotel. It was there that Banks took Bigelow to see the Pathfinder. Convinced that he had found the man for the party, Bigelow called a conference of interested leaders, among whom were Blair of Silver Spring, then in New York on a somewhat similar political errand; Samuel J. Tilden, the only one there who remained a Democrat; Edwin D. Morgan and Edward Miller. All, with the exception of Tilden, wanted Frémont nominated at Philadelphia. Bigelow asked Blair to approach Benton on the subject of his support of his son-in-law, if

[51] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Jan. 25, 1856.

[52] Allan Nevins, *Frémont, the West's Greatest Adventurer* (New York, 1928), II, 475-78.

he were nominated. Blair with much assurance agreed to do it.[53]

The Blairs, Banks, and Wilson were assiduous propagandists. Frank found Frémont popular with the West, especially the Germans. Many newspapers had spoken favorably of him before spring was well on its way. The East failed to become enthusiastic about him. New Yorkers preferred Seward or Chase, men who had borne the brunt of party battles. Others, among whom were Lincoln, wanted John McLean of Ohio, Justice of the Federal Supreme Court. Chase was not unacceptable to the Blairs. They, however, like many others, feared that his abolitionism would repel too many voters. Seward had curtly refused to help Blair organize the party, giving as his reason that he never engaged in factional contests. Now that the party had some hope of success, it turned from Seward of the "higher law" to a more available candidate. McLean desired the nomination. But he was past seventy years of age, too old and "fogy" to lead the aggressive element among the Republicans. Frémont was free of party entanglements, his name was enshrouded with tales of adventure; he was a young, ardent, "active, daring, gallant figure, just the leader to typify a young and crusading party." [54]

Prospects looked bright when Blair went to interview Benton to obtain his promise to support Frémont. To his great surprise Benton refused to do it, giving as his reason that a crisis was at hand. Frémont would be a sectional candidate, who, if elected, would not be acceptable to the South. The latter would disrupt the Union.[55] He proposed to support Buchanan for President as "the safest chance for preserving the peace of the country," and published a letter, addressed to the people of Missouri, announcing what he intended to do.

Such action on the part of Benton placed the Blairs in a difficult position. Frank rose above the standards of party politics in his decision to stand on his principles and "save Missouri." His action naturally embarrassed his father no little at Washington,

[53] Allan Nevins, *The Evening Post, A Century of Journalism* (New York, 1922), 251; Nevins, *Frémont,* 478-79.

[54] Nevins, *Frémont,* 479-81.

[55] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, May 17, 1856; Jefferson City *Examiner,* June 14, 1856.

but he, nevertheless, had his warm support. He hurriedly made his troubles known to Montgomery and his father in a letter dated June 12, 1856, less than a week before the Republican convention:[56]

The position of things is very embarrassing to me particularly as Benton is thoroughly for Buchanan— There is no earthly chance of making even a division against him in this state. Benton's friends (almost to a man) will support old Buck most cordially. The Anties will support him not cordially, but with a show of zeal in order to cover up & cause to be forgotten their hostility to him in the Convention [at Cincinnati]. The old line Whigs will go for him warmly and his majority in this state will reach 30,000[.] Bentons advocacy has brought about this result— And his friends think that there must be some understanding between them (Benton & Buchanan) & they experience *infinite relief* at not being compelled to oppose the Democratic nominee— If I dissent there is nothing left but to decline the race for Congress. There is not time to take advice from the friends to whom I should like to resort in this emergency. I must decide for myself & without consultation. I have, in fact, made up my mind already upon a conviction that it is the best that can be done. I have no thought of abandoning any position I have heretofore taken upon the Kansas question or the slavery question, but as we cannot do better in this state of the Presidential question than to support Buchanan, as we cannot even make a show against him since Benton has taken his ground. The next thing to be thought of is to save our own state from the nullifiers. If they carry the state they will inaugurate in Missouri the same reign of terror which exists in Kansas— Already they have thrown Parks Newspaper in the Missouri River & committed murders & intrigues within the borders of this state & nobody has even thought of appealing to the state laws or state authorities for protection or redress. If they should fix the Nullification dynasty in power again Missouri will become another Kansas with the official sanction of our chief executive & the color of law will be given to the greatest atrocities against law & against the rights of citizens. Shall we make a useless effort for the "Wild Turkey" [Frémont] or shall we make an effort which may be effective to save the State from the Nullifiers? I have made up my mind to fight for the state & let those in more fortunate circumstances fight the great battle of the nation. I have sought most zealously to bring affairs in Missouri to such a position that we could make a fight here for the right. And I confess that I am deeply mortified at the result— I did not conceive it possible that Benton would support the Cincinnati nominee. And I have yielded point by point

[56] Blair MSS.

under the pressure of circumstances, with the hope that he would finally be brought to bay & forced to stand against that nomination, but the defeat of Douglas & Pierce & the nomination of Buchanan has given him the pretext he wanted, and *it is utterly impossible to make any stand in Missouri, that would not be ridiculous from its utter uselessness in opposition to Buchanan* & so we are transferred to the Buch Democracy soul & body. The "Democrat" put up the names of the nominees the day of their nomination . . . because it was a *question of meat & bread with them & a question of the existence or non-existence of the Benton Democracy in the State*. . . . It does not follow however that we are constrained by the actual state of affairs to support Buchanan as the best we can do—that I shall take back anything I have ever said on the nigger question. I shall proclaim the principles which I have hitherto professed & stand or fall by them, even if I am not able to give them expression in the Presidential contest— There is but one chance of holding the vote of Missouri from Buchanan—and that is by keeping up the two electoral tickets. The Anties will probably keep up theirs and their contest will probably create a feeling of exasperation between the wings of the party or will make [them] unwilling to yield or withdraw their ticket. If so the State may vote for Fillmore. Give this letter to my father and let me have the view of both of you upon its contents. I am not half satisfied with it or with the position I propose to take.

Two things made it easier to stir the evangelical and crusading elements in the North and rally it in great force behind the Republican party. The Kansas question remained a thorn in the side of the Democracy. About two hundred persons were killed and millions of dollars' worth of property was destroyed in that distracted region between November 1, 1855, and December 1, 1856. "Civil war existed in practically every community, and most brutal assaults, even to murder, were witnessed weekly." The towns of Lawrence and Leavenworth were sacked. Emigrants from the South and the East were pouring into Kansas to make it either a slave or a free state. The Missourians were divided on the issue. The lives of Frank Blair and James S. Rollins were threatened daily.

Governor Shannon failed to restore order in Kansas through the use of troops. President Pierce accused the East of taking advantage of the pro-slavery forces through the use of the Emigrant Aid Societies which, he said, urged men of anti-slavery sentiment to go live in Kansas. He refused to interfere in behalf

of the anti-slavery men to save them from the outrages of the invading Missourians who were urged on by Atchison. Sharp debate in Congress could not be avoided. Two reports from the committee on territories were made to the Senate on March 12. The majority report which was read by Douglas recommended a course that would ultimately recognize the pro-slavery constitution. The minority report was offered by Collamer of Vermont. Douglas charged the Emigrant Aid Societies with unfairness. Sumner answered Douglas in a spirited five-minute speech. Seward moved to admit Kansas under the free-state constitution known as the Topeka constitution. Douglas, who was noted for his intemperate speeches, venomously attacked Sumner. Sumner promised his friends that he would reply effectively. These heated debates on Kansas continued in Congress until they reached the crisis in the outrageous assault on Sumner on May 22.[57]

Sumner had on May 19-21 delivered one of the most terrible philippics ever uttered in Congress. It was aimed at Senator A. P. Butler of South Carolina, an old friend of Calhoun, and the pro-slavery leaders in general. Sumner had prepared his speech with great care. When he rose to speak he found an excited audience. The Missourians burned Lawrence on May 21. The whole country was feverishly excited. John Brown was soon to commit his dastardly murder at Ossawatomie. Buford's Alabamans were in Kansas to guarantee Southern rights by armed force. Atchison predicted civil war in the near future. The coming political national conventions were only a few days off. The spectators crowded into the Senate chamber, filling the galleries and lobbies, and finally the anteroom was opened to the ladies. In spite of a sweltering heat, with the thermometer at ninety in the shade, the Senators had occupied most of their seats. The journalists left not one of their seats vacant. Members of the House crowded into the room. Delegates on their way to the convention to be held in Cincinnati had stopped to hear the debates in Congress. Thurlow Weed was there ready to report for his Albany *Evening Journal*. Blair of Silver Spring had ridden with Mrs. Blair into Washington during the early morning hours, and now occupied a seat amidst the throng.

[57] Storey, *Sumner*, ch. 8.

It is little wonder that Sumner was inspired by his audience. He delivered his epochal speech "The Crime Against Kansas" with "the earnestness of intense conviction." Butler and Douglas were compared to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Butler had chosen for his mistress the harlot Slavery. That "Knight of Chivalry" would "compel fellow men to unpaid toil"; he would separate husband and wife, and sell their children on the auction block. Douglas, the very Sancho Panza of slavery, was the squire of it, "ready to do its humiliating offices." He dreamed of subduing the North, but that was impossible; he could not subdue immortal principles. He wrestled with the infinite power of the sentiments of the human heart, and as a consequence he must fall.

It was a great speech on a great subject on a great occasion. Its style was literary and oratorical, pedantic, vigorous, full of grace and charm, egotistical.[58] But to tell the South that "slavery is the sum of all villainies" was not convincing. The advisability of such a serious attack was very questionable. The Northern abolition press welcomed it. To the South it was an outrage on privilege, honor, and its institution of slavery. Cass condemned it as "the most un-American and unpatriotic that ever grated on the ears of the members" of the Senate. Douglas followed Sumner in a speech in which he attacked him with great violence. "Is it his object," he asked, "to provoke some of us to kick him as we would a dog in the streets, that he may get sympathy upon the just chastisement?" Cassidy pronounced it a speech "unworthy of any scholar or gentleman." Even Benjamin Wade feared the speech was more harmful than beneficial.

On the next day, while Sumner was at work at his seat after the adjournment of the Senate, Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina, Congressman and cousin to Butler, approached Sumner and addressed him thus: "Mr. Sumner, I have read your speech twice. It is a libel on South Carolina and Mr. Butler, who is a relative of mine." Completing his statement, he struck Sumner a hard blow over the head with a cane. The blow stunned him, but he was so large and powerful that he rose, wrenching his desk from its fastenings as he did so. Blow after blow fell quickly on his head as he sank insensible to the floor. Friends of Brooks were

[58] Emerson David Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860* (New York, 1911), 56.

present to see that he had a free hand. Toombs looked complacently on; Douglas offered not a single remonstrance, and Crittenden was warned not to interfere, or he would receive the same treatment.

The assault was deliberately planned and executed. Sumner was picked up from the floor with gaping wounds on his head. He was carried to his rooms after Dr. Boyle administered first aid. After he regained consciousness he begged his friend, Wilson of Massachusetts, to go on with the contest with slavery. His nerves were so shattered that he remained absent from his duties in the Senate until December, 1857.

Meantime he lived at different places while seeking health. He went about the middle of June to Silver Spring to live with the elder Blairs. For nearly four weeks after the assault he had lain on his back approximately twenty-two out of every twenty-four hours. At Silver Spring he found himself amid the turmoil of politics. Men were coming and going, seeking Blair's advice about one thing or another. There was much to be done on the eve of the convention at Philadelphia. Blair was seriously alarmed at the probable action of the Know-nothing convention. They might nominate a man for President who would embarrass the Republicans.[59] Silver Spring was the political rendezvous of the men who were organizing the new party. There at the spring they could sit in the shade of the stately trees, drink of the wines from Blair's cellar not one hundred yards away, and eat the rich viands served by the colored servants. There the plans for the nomination of Frémont were made; there Sumner listened and advised; there men started on one of the delightful "Grotto" walks, to end their wandering at the house where they were entertained by the socially accomplished and fair Betty Blair Lee. Then they returned to the capital singing the praises of Silver Spring. On June 25, Blair took Sumner to the Capital where he was summoned to appear before a grand jury which was investigating the assault by Brooks. The numerous calls wore him out, and he returned to Silver Spring on June 28 to stay until July 5. Seward drove out to see him on July 4, and found him walking and moving like a man afflicted with paralysis. "His elasticity

[59] Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 270.

and vigor" were gone, as were, also, his "vivacity of spirit and his impatience for study." His mind, however, remained clear and active. On July 5, he went to Washington to take the train for the North purposely to escape the intense summer heat in the District of Columbia.[60] He later went to Europe, where he made acquaintances that enabled him to exert an important influence in the period of the Civil War.

The reaction in the country after the assault was important. The North deeply resented the outrage. Indignation meetings were held. Cassidy called it an "act of rage and folly" and asked that the "majesty of the Law, and the Sovereignty" of Massachusetts be "vindicated by prompt and efficient action."[61] Massachusetts reëlected Sumner without opposition. The poet, Whittier, had read and re-read Sumner's speech and pronounced it the best of its kind; Longfellow said it was "the greatest voice on the greatest subject that" had "been uttered since we became a nation." The action of Brooks as the representative of the South was an unpardonable offense against law, man, and the conscience of the North. While partisans who argued in the Senate for want of jurisdiction and decision refused to take action against Brooks, the House merely censured him, and the state of South Carolina unanimously reëlected him after he had resigned his seat. The South applauded him as a hero. Mason of Virginia said: "I know of none whose public career I hold more worthy of the full and cordial approbation of his constituents than his"; Jefferson Davis expressed his "high regard and esteem" for Brooks, and sympathized with the South Carolinians who returned him to the House of Representatives; nine canes were reported to have been sent to him, and the students of the University of Virginia voted to send him a cane with "a heavy gold head, which will be suitably inscribed, and also bear upon it a device of the human head badly cracked and broken." The Richmond *Enquirer* reported that "the chivalry of the South" was thoroughly aroused.

With the horrible picture of an injured Sumner and of "Bleeding Kansas" before them, two of the Blairs went to Philadelphia

[60] Edward L. Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner* (4 vols., Boston, 1894), III, 441, 485-86, 503.

[61] The *Atlas & Argus*, May 24, 1856.

to attend the convention in no frame of mind to balk at any expression of strong feeling against Buchanan, his party, or slavery. Never before had they been so positively "Republican" in feeling.

Six hundred delegates gathered to open the convention in Music Fund Hall, the largest hall in Philadelphia, on June 17, the anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Hopefulness and enthusiasm pervaded the whole assemblage. Anti-slavery radicals dominated the convention. Many of the delegates were preachers who talked "loud and continuous." The evangelical element added strength to the anti-slavery men. They were earnest, sincere men who were fighting for principles—free speech, free thought, free men. What a contrast to "the rowdy barroom atmosphere of the Democratic convention which had just named Buchanan at Cincinnati!"

The convention was unquestionably sectional. Only four slave states were represented, and only a handful of delegates came from those states. All of the free states except three of the frontier states and territories were represented. Among the delegates were such radicals as Joshua R. Giddings, Thaddeus Stevens, Zachariah Chandler, and Owen Lovejoy. Among others were the Kings (Preston, John, and Rufus), Charles F. Adams, James Watson Webb, John Bigelow, David Wilmot, Alphonso Taft (father of William Howard Taft), John M. Palmer, Norman B. Judd, Henry S. Lane, S. C. Pomeroy, Edwin D. Morgan, and the elder Francis P. Blair.

As chairman of the National Committee, Morgan called the convention to order and nominated for a temporary chairman, the Hon. Robert Emmet of New York, a son of an Irish Patriot! The convention received him "amid the most tumultuous applause." His address was punctuated with "cheers," "loud cheers," "rapturous and prolonged cheering," and "tremendous cheering" throughout its entire length. Emmet's address was followed by a spirited prayer, the naming of the committees, and the seating of a delegation from the "Council of One Hundred" Democrats of New York as delegates with very great enthusiasm and applause.[62] Henry Lane was next elected permanent chairman. A

[62] These Democrats of New York were seceders from their party.

recess was then taken until four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the committee on credentials reported. The convention was now so enthusiastic that little attention was paid to the proportionate representation of the states or to the credentials of those who claimed seats. It wanted speeches. On invitation Caleb B. Smith of Indiana made a brief address. Vehement calls from the floor of the convention for Owen Lovejoy brought forth that veteran anti-slavery propagandist. His speech was enthusiastically applauded. Then a delegate moved that Wilson of Massachusetts be invited to address them. He ascended "the platform amid a perfect storm of cheering and applause, again and again renewed." He carried out a part of Sumner's request by vehemently denouncing the arrogance of slavocracy. He stirred the emotions of the delegates to their highest pitch.

> Gentlemen, [he said,] civil war rages beyond the Missouri. This administration of Franklin Pierce has forced that war upon us. Franklin Pierce went to the Cincinnati convention with the light of the burning dwellings of Kansas flashing upon his brazen brow. He went there with the blood of the murdered freemen of Kansas dripping from his polluted hands. Aye, that convention spewed out the thing it had used. It spewed him out, and today he has gone down, too, beneath the withering scorn and contempt of the American people.
>
> [Douglas had been used as a tool and cast aside.] But the slave power wanted a tool—it wanted the vote of a Northern state, and it casts its eye on Pennsylvania and James Buchanan. . . . Mr. Buchanan represents this day the Democracy of Franklin Pierce, for he has ceased to be James Buchanan, and must square himself to the platform of the party. . . . Now, sir, we wish to defeat James Buchanan, to overthrow that platform, to enthrone Liberty in the government of this republic.

Some time before he was through he had lashed his audience to a frenzy. He closed his address "amid tremendous cheering," and the tired delegates adjourned to meet on the morning of the second day.

That evening the delegates could read in a New York paper, if they snatched a look at it between conferences and their ordinary political talk, something like the following:

> Governor Reeder of Kansas continues to denounce the Border Ruffians and slavery interests for their interference in Kansas. While

traveling through New England he spoke to an enthusiastic audience in Boston, June 16.

A meeting was held by the Young Republican Club of . . . [many places] to express their indignation at the assault by Brooks on Sumner.

Senator Hamlin of Maine, an old Democrat, announces that he repudiates the Cincinnati platform and will support the Republicans.

The North American National Convention [Know-nothings] is split. The anti-slavery men withdrew when they saw that the South was in control of the Convention. Northern wing will nominate an anti-slavery man for President.

The New York *Tribune* will publish a campaign paper, from June 20 to about November 12; price is one dollar. "Shall Slavery pour itself out without restraint, and find no limit but the Pacific Ocean?"

Telegram to the *Tribune:* "The nomination of Fremont seems to be inevitable."—"J. S. P[ike]."

When the convention re-assembled Wednesday morning, harmony and unbounded enthusiasm still pervaded it. A spectator said it was like a "Methodist Conference." Andrew Jackson had believed he stood for "principles, not men." Van Buren had professed the same belief. Blair had hammered that idea into his "Northern Democracy" in the *Globe.* He had tried hard to persuade Benton and Van Buren to join him in the new crusade on the basis of principle. At last he had the extreme satisfaction of beholding a presidential nominating convention, with the calling of which he had had much to do, stand squarely on the principles which he had been advocating for years. He served on the committee that wrote the platform which the convention adopted. With him were David Wilmot, Gideon Welles, Preston King, and other friends. He was also placed on the Committee of Credentials, and on the Committee on Rules and Appointments. His name, when called, was greeted with the loudest and most prolonged applause of any of the men placed on the committees. Only the nomination which was soon to be made could completely fill his cup of joy.

David Wilmot solemnly read the platform, resolution by resolution. Intense silence prevailed until the end of each resolution and then it was greeted with rousing cheers. Tremendous and prolonged applause followed the reading of the plank on slavery. By the adoption of the platform the new party went on record

as being opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, to the policy of the Pierce administration, to the extension of slavery in free territory, to the admission of Kansas as a slave state, and in favor of the restoration of the "action of the federal government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson."

The convention affirmed its adherence to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, especially to the "self-evident truth, that all men are endowed with inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It declared that the primary object of our federal government is to secure those rights. It declared that no authority existed "to give legal existence of slavery in any territory of the United States, while the present Constitution shall be maintained." On the other hand, Congress has the power "to prohibit in the territories those two relics of barbarism —polygamy and slavery."

After describing the history of the murders, robberies, arsons, and other outrages on the free people in Kansas, the convention asked for the immediate admission of Kansas as a free state. The Kansas plank provoked a tremendous demonstration. "The sound of deep throated huzzas rolled out of the hall and was heard blocks away. The band played and the roar of applause recurred and swelled again and again, earnest, fearful, portentous." It denounced "the highwayman's plea that 'might makes right,' embodied in the Ostend Circular" as unworthy of American diplomacy. This plank was a political blow aimed at Buchanan, who had joined with Soulé and Mason in the issuance of the Manifesto at Ostend. They had demanded, in 1854, the seizure of Cuba from Spain, if that country refused to transfer her rich possession to us. The delegates, being largely from the North, asked that the federal government give immediate aid for the construction of a railroad along "the most central practicable route" to the Pacific Ocean. They furthermore committed themselves to internal improvements of a national character at the expense of the federal government. The convention closed its platform with an invitation to all men of all parties who could support the principles of the Republican party to affiliate with it.

The nomination of a candidate was in order after the adoption of the platform. The Blairs and their friends who had

aggressively supported the candidacy of Frémont had done well. Stanwood says Seward had seen the organization of the new party with reluctance. He had refused to allow his name to be presented at the convention, counting on his chance in 1860 as being a better one to be elected President. Chase, whom Blair wanted next to Frémont, had been recently too closely identified with the Democracy to win the nomination and, consequently, he withdrew his name after the convention met. Justice McLean had a strong following of Whig-Republicans who hoped that, if nominated, he would hold the vote of a larger portion of the Whigs than could a younger and more radical man. McLean had been on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States since Jackson appointed him in 1829. Lincoln insisted that the selection of a nominee was a serious question. He favored McLean. "Nine tenths of the Anti-Nebraska votes," he said, "have to come from old Whigs." The Republicans could not win without them. He feared that if the Republicans nominated a radical the conservative Whigs would vote for Buchanan. "They would stand [Frank] Blair or Fremont for Vice-President, but not more." But men like Dana considered McLean entirely too old and conservative. Gustav Koerner summed up the situation correctly when he said "the Democrats ruled the Convention." They determined the choice of a nominee—John C. Frémont, Free-Soil Democrat.

The air was surcharged with sentiment for Frémont when the convention convened. He had been well coached by the Blairs, Banks, Bigelow, and a few others. His letter to the Know-nothings, which might have been bad for his party, was withheld from the mail upon the insistence of Blair, Isaac Sherman, and his other political managers. This letter was written in June during the Know-nothing convention in New York. There was prospect for an agreement between the Know-nothings and the Republicans on the same candidates. Frémont said in the letter:[88]

> On all sides there is a generous disposition to rise above all political animosities and all prejudices of birth and religion. With the feelings which are actuating the body of the people at this moment I take pleasure in saying that I am thoroughly imbued. I am hostile to slavery

[88] Nevins, II, 482.

upon principle and feeling. While I feel myself inflexible in the belief that it ought not to be interfered with where it exists under the shield of state sovereignty, I am as inflexibly opposed to its extension on this continent beyond its present limits. Animated with these views, confident of their success, and earnestly disposed to do battle persistently in their behalf, and having but little active sympathy with secondary questions, which are not involved in the great issue, I am naturally identified with the cause represented by the great Republican Convention about to assemble in Philadelphia. I could not therefore accept unconditionally the candidateship of the American party, inasmuch as I would feel bound by the decisions of that party with which I am identified.

As a matter of fact, Frémont had been the most talked-of man in the country for years. His five trips across the mountains, "full of picturesque adventure, desperate incident, imminent peril," were familiar to the Americans. The surveys to the Pacific Ocean and the conquest of California were subjects inseparably connected with his name. "Stories of his experiences were dramatic and thrilling—Indian attacks, fights with bears, defiance of Mexican troops, golden sands, Pike's Peak, snow, cold, storm; and these tales written in sensational style and illustrated by pictures of daring, hazard, and triumph, had been read and admired all over the country, especially by the young people." [64]

He was the candidate of the progressives in a new party. His experience in politics was limited to that of being Benton's son-in-law and a few months as senator from California. He was still a young man at forty-three years of age, robust, virile, dashing. The astute Blair, skilled in political journalism, saw to it that Frémont received favorable mention in the Northern press months before the convention. Bigelow ran a biographical sketch of him in installments in the *Evening Post.* The demand for him was made to appear spontaneous. Frank Blair's close friendship with the German editors in the West was used advantageously. A majority of the German newspapers in the Union favored the nomination of the Pathfinder. The *Tribune* came out in strong defense of Frémont on the day the convention met. "As by a spontaneous instinct almost," said the *Tribune,* "the People in all quarters seem to have fixed upon *Col. Fremont* as their candidate

[64] Beveridge, *Lincoln,* II, 394.

for the Presidency." When at last the delegates had assembled at five o'clock, Wednesday, June 18, the air was electrified with expectancy. Ex-Governor Patterson of New Jersey formally withdrew the name of William H. Seward. That done, Judge Spaulding of Ohio solemnly announced the withdrawal of the name of the venerable Justice McLean. Thaddeus Stevens begged that this not be done; it meant the loss of Pennsylvania, he asserted, and with it the loss of the election. His eloquence and his impassioned appeal could not move his fellow delegates of Pennsylvania, many of whom were for Frémont, to support McLean unanimously. Thomas J. Mitchell of Ohio fell into line by formally withdrawing the name of Chase. Meantime Blair had nervously watched the proceedings. The third withdrawal gave him the assurance that caused a smile of satisfaction to spread over his face. Another motion and the convention was ready to tally the results of an informal vote for the presidential nominees. Breathlessly he leaned forward from his seat on the platform to catch the results. Frémont headed the list with 359 votes. McLean stood second with 196. The fiery, erratic James Watson Webb then offered a resolution "that John C. Fremont of California be, and he hereby is, unanimously nominated by this convention by acclamation," and closed his remarks with a brief address in support of his resolution. David Wilmot came instantly to his support. Loud cheers were rolling from the hall. An amendment to vote at once passed, the votes were quickly counted, and the president announced that Frémont had 520. Webb took the floor to ask for a unanimous vote. Chairman Morgan called for it to be accompanied with three hearty cheers. Pandemonium broke loose. "The band blared forth, the floor and galleries were a sea of tossing hats and waving handkerchiefs, and as an American flag bearing Frémont's name was raised from the platform, and a broad pennant inscribed John C. Frémont for President was drawn across the full width of the hall, the cheering became deafening. Banners were flung from the windows, and the applause of the crowds in the streets mingled with that in the hall."

After successive outbursts of cheering, men found themselves hot and hoarse; the convention adjourned until Thursday

morning to decide on a nominee for Vice-President, and the question of affiliation with a part of the Know-nothings which had pulled away from that party. A number of favorite sons were nominated. The leaders in this group were Wm. L. Dayton of New Jersey, Lincoln, Banks, Wilmot, and Sumner. Enthusiastic speeches on each nominee were followed by loud cheering. The first ballot showed that Dayton had 253 votes, Lincoln 110, Banks 46, Wilmot 43, Sumner 35. Then followed the good-natured withdrawal of names and the final vote that gave Dayton the nomination unanimously. At last came the appointment of committees on notification and invitations, resolutions of thanks, and a veritable love-feast of speechmaking and rousing cheers.

The happy delegates left Philadelphia with the cry of "Free Speech, Free Press, Free Men, Free Labor and Fremont." It became the watchword of the party in the campaign. They had empowered the chairman of the convention to appoint a committee of three men "to address all the parties of the country, with a view to elucidate the principles of action and to conciliate them to the great object to which the labors of this Convention have been devoted." Blair was made chairman of the committee. His overtures to all who opposed the extension of slavery were effective. His friend Banks refused the nomination for the presidency by the Northern wing of the Know-nothings. That faction then nominated Frémont. Thousands of Know-nothings joined the Republicans. Soon there were only two strong parties in the West: Republicans and Democrats.

3

The people of the North were a church-going people in 1856. Their preachers joined them in the campaign with fiery zeal to make the Republicans victorious at the polls. A majority of the followers of Frémont entered the campaign with a vim and enthusiasm based on something akin to spiritual exaltation. The two leading candidates endorsed their platforms without exceptions. The people understood that they were voting on the issue of Kansas. A minority of the Republicans did not believe Frémont was the best candidate; they knew him as an erratic, effervescent,

dashing man with little experience in politics. As a matter of fact, the Republicans have been apologizing for Frémont ever since 1856.

The news, however, of his nomination was greeted by huzzas and "the firing of one hundred guns," or of cannon, from Boston to the far frontier, and from northern Wisconsin to the Ohio River. Greeley and Dana had the Tribune Building illuminated on the night of June 18. Rallies and ratification meetings were held in town and country to endorse the nominations and the platform. A monster one was staged in New York City, June 25, at which Senator Trumbull of Illinois and other eminent men delivered addresses on slavery and "bleeding Kansas." The rally came to a close when the crowd marched off, banners flying, to greet Colonel Frémont at his rooms. Before Trumbull had spoken, the chairman invited Mr. Camp to sing a new campaign song, and urged the crowd to join in the chorus. The enthusiastic Republicans sang with spirit, waved their hats and handkerchiefs, and cheered loudly, on and on, for many minutes. The "Rallying Song" was to the tune of "Marseillaise," and the first of three stanzas was as follows:

Behold! the furious storm is rolling,
Which Border-Fiends, confederates, raise.
The Dogs of War, let loose, are howling,
And lo! our infant cities blaze.
And shall we calmly view the ruin,
While lawless force with giant stride
Spreads desolation far and wide,
In guiltless blood his hands imbruing.

Arise, arise, ye brave!
And let our war-cry be
Free Speech, Free Press, Free Soil, Free Men,
Fre-mont and *Victory!*

These rallies and ratification meetings were continued until late in the campaign. They were generally conducted by Young Republican Clubs which were organized to aid in the election of the ticket. They raised money, bought and distributed documents, obtained good speakers, and finally at the close of the campaign, helped to get out the voters to the polls, provided the ballots, and

examined the ballot boxes before voting began on Tuesday, November 4. At the rallies great processions were conducted with much show. Banners and mottoes were much in evidence. At Hatboro', the Frémonters of Old Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania, marched by the thousands. The procession of "big teams" headed by two hundred men on horses, was three miles long. David Wilmot, J. P. Hale, and Anson Burlingame addressed a motley throng of between 10,000 and 15,000 people. Lincoln addressed 10,000 people at Princeton, and 35,000 at Alton. Ohio was deeply interested in the campaign. Twenty-five thousand people attended a Frémont rally at Massillon. One of the most imposing rallies during the campaign was held at Indianapolis, Indiana. Cannon roared and fifty bands blared while an immense gathering marched along streets decorated with banners, mottoes, and flags. Popular orators addressed the crowds gathered about five different stands. On November 3, Republicans gave Sumner a rousing welcome in Boston. Fifty thousand people took part in that mammoth demonstration. Everywhere the orators found willing ears to hear the never-old subject of Free Speech, Free Soil, Free Press, and Frémont.[65]

The Republican orators who were in demand, among others, were George William Curtis, Seward, Lincoln, Wilmot, Hale, Banks, ex-Governor Reeder of Kansas Territory, Wade, Giddings, and Frank Blair of Missouri. Lincoln spoke ninety times for the party and Frémont. He promised that his party would abide by the decisions of the Supreme Court on the subject of slavery. As to the threat of the dissolution of the Union, he exclaimed at Galena, Illinois, "The Union will not be dissolved. We don't want to dissolve it, and if you [Democrats] attempt it we won't let you." Schuyler Colfax worked effectively in Indiana. James R. Doolittle won his spurs in Wisconsin and went to the Senate on the Kansas issue. Hannibal Hamlin of Maine convinced the people that he had renounced slavocracy and carried his state for Frémont. Seward was gouty until October, when he first addressed crowds of eager and admiring listeners. At Detroit he spoke to 20,000 on October 2. George William Curtis, who had

[65] *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* for Aug., Sept., Oct.; Nevins, *Frémont,* II, ch. 28; Beveridge, *Lincoln,* II, ch. 6.

won recognition among men of letters as the author of the *Howadji* books and of *Prue and I,* made "stump speeches" clothed in fine rhetoric and full of "tender and stirring appeal." He believed the struggle for a free Kansas was as glorious as our struggle in 1776. Frank Blair labored in Missouri as a Benton Democrat, and after he was elected to the House of Representatives went elsewhere to speak for the Republicans.

Prominent journals and authors used their influence for the cause of Republicanism. Henry J. Raymond's New York *Times,* Greeley's *Tribune,* Bryant and Bigelow's *Evening Post,* and Bennett's New York *Herald,* which had been an old Democratic organ, all worked unceasingly for Frémont. The Rochester *Democrat* announced for Frémont at an early date. The Chicago *Tribune,* owned by Joseph Medill and Horace White, was rampant for the "Black Republicans"; the Philadelphia *North American,* and the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican* were strong adherents. From the pages of the latter came these words (Aug. 8):

> Say, ye freemen, who shall be
> The next leader of the free?
> Know ye who could fearless dare
> Front the savage and the bear?
> Who can scale the mountain steeps—
> Plow the drifts and bridge the deeps?
> Stern of purpose—wise in plan,
> Our Fremont is just the man.

Greeley and Pike traveled about to report authentic news on the progress of the campaign to the *Tribune.* The *Campaign Tribune* reached a circulation of 50,000 on July 4, 60,000 on July 25, and 68,000 on October 3. A single subscription for the season was one dollar, cheaper if taken in lots. During the campaign the *Tribune* raised a fund for the "hungry," free-state people whose property had been destroyed in Kansas by the "Border Ruffians." It started the fund with a gift of $1,000; that amount was increased by small gifts from the anti-slavery people until it reached $18,479 on December 2. The circulation of the *Weekly Tribune* reached 175,000 by November 4, and it consequently possessed the largest circulation in the world. The burden of its argument for Frémont was based on "bleeding Kansas" and the

slavery question in general. Bryant and Bigelow made the *Evening Post* as strong a "Black Republican" paper as Greeley made the *Tribune.* The Cincinnati *Volksblatt* made a poll of the German press early in July, and found 45 German newspapers for Buchanan, while 49 were for Frémont.

Campaign literature was distributed in prodigious quantities. Many biographies of Frémont were published. Greeley probably had the best one, which he published in the English, German, and Welsh languages. He circulated a thirty-two page pamphlet on the *Life of Col. Frémont* at the nominal cost of four cents each. Bigelow began a *Life of Col. John C. Fremont* before the Republican convention convened. The main facts concerning the early life of Frémont were supplied by Mrs. Frémont. The book firm of Derby and Jackson distributed the lives of the different nominees. On July 25, they advertised for 20,000 agents to sell *The Life and Public Services of James Buchanan,* by R. G. Horton, but on the same day they called for 101,000 agents to sell Bigelow's *Life of Col. John C. Fremont.* It was advertised that agents could easily make as high as $300 a month selling Bigelow's book. Smucker's *Life of Fremont* sold in its thirtieth thousand at one dollar a copy by August 19. It was reported that Chas. W. Upham's *Life of Fremont* brought him $4,000 royalty at ten cents a copy by August 8. Harriet Beecher Stowe brought out a new work entitled *Dred A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp.* It was a tale of social and domestic influences of slavery. It was far inferior in character to *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* but it, nevertheless, was widely read, highly lauded, and doubtless had much influence. The dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* touched the hearts of thousands, and brought Frémont many votes. Its continued circulation was beyond the belief of the author and publisher.

Many speeches of influential statesmen were distributed wholesale at nominal prices. They were published by newspapers and placed in the hands of the voters by the Young Republican Clubs, Emigrant Aid Societies, and individual party workers. Voluntary committees raised funds with which to distribute documents. Sumner's speech, "The Crime Against Kansas," was a leader. It was translated into Welsh and German. M. W. Tappan's "Mod-

ern Democracy, the Ally of Slavery" was a vote-getter, but Seward's speech on "The Immediate Admission of Kansas as a Free State" was the more popular of the two. Ex-Governor Reeder's "Letter in Favor of Fremont," published with other campaign material, was comparable in popularity to Schuyler Colfax's speech on "The Laws of Kansas." The attack on Frémont's religion forced his managers to publish and scatter widely information which proved him not to be a Catholic. Henry Ward Beecher came to his rescue in the *Independent.* Badges bearing the picture of the favorite candidate were worn by thousands of ardent voters. Frank Leslie's magazine published an edition including life-like portraits of Frémont and Dayton to be sold at ten cents a copy at newsdealers. Life-size colored portraits of Frémont sold at one dollar each. The *Tribune* published a placard with the life of Frémont outlined thereupon, and Henry Ward Beecher's map in colors was to show the strength of slavery, and what slaveholders desired most in the West.

The crusading spirit of the Republicans demanded music and poetry. The young men organized themselves into companies which they called Wide-Awakes. They were well named. Their "fife and drum corps shrilled and rattled" day and night. Glee clubs entertained crowds of Frémonters in opera-houses, schoolhouses, and village town-halls. At every big rally were from two to fifty bands. The demand for campaign songs was so great that one newspaper published fifteen in one issue.

The minor poets like the Cary sisters and T. B. Read published poetry in quantities. The great poets like Emerson and Bryant made speeches for the Republicans. Whittier wrote "The Pass of the Sierra," which was published in the *National Era,* and later in other campaign papers. After describing the heroic passage through the mountains of the West, he called on his candidate to

> Rise up, Frémont! and go before;
> The Hour must have its Man;
> Put on the hunting-shirt once more,
> And lead in Freedom's van!

The election was not to be won by "a song and a dance" and a crusade against slavery. Buchanan was welcomed by a large portion of the North as a safe man. His unqualified acceptance

of the Cincinnati platform convinced the Southern leaders that he was of the Calhoun school. The Democracy had seasoned campaigners in Douglas, John Van Buren, Benton, Breckinridge, and Buchanan. The delegates at Cincinnati wrote their platform to allow "Pussy-footing" on the slavery issue. A large group of the Van Buren Democrats, consequently, remained loyal to the party.

The nomination of Frémont was not a day old before charges of incompetency were levelled at him. The Democrats attempted to prove that he was a Catholic in order that the Know-nothing vote might be deflected from the Republicans. Partisan papers kept the religious issue before the people until the day of the election. Henry Ward Beecher and a Republican committee interviewed Frémont to ascertain the truth. To reasonable men the charge was satisfactorily disproved, but it affected the final vote.[66] Democratic speakers and editors exaggerated the stories which came from California telling of Frémont's shady handling of an Indian beef contract and his relations with Palmer, Cook and Company, a "political swindling house." The powerful California papers opposed him, and as a result he lost the state in the election. Greeley claimed that the state was settled largely by pro-slavery men who naturally refused to vote a Republican ticket. Less effective were the unfair charges of drunkenness and slave-ownership, neither of which was true. Both Frémont and his wife were opposed to slavery. They had "again and again declined to accept a single slave from their southern relatives, though often pressed to do so during their privations on the frontier." Some of the charges were petty and ridiculous. It was considered good politics to denounce him for wearing a mustache and beard like a foreigner.[67]

The Democrats were seriously alarmed before the campaign progressed far. Charge after charge failed to stay the rising tide of Republicanism. The Republicans kept to the important issues and avoided petty personalities. Their conduct "during the canvass," says Rhodes, "was almost faultless." The immense crowds that went to hear them were inspiring spectacles for the leaders

[66] Frémont was an Episcopalian. Not one of the forty Catholic journals was for Frémont late in the campaign.

[67] I. T. Martin, *Recollections of Elizabeth Benton Frémont* (New York, 1912), 77.

to witness. The mention of the name Frémont brought cheers almost anywhere in the North except at Democratic rallies. Students cheered the mention of his name on commencement day at Dartmouth College.[68] The students at Wesleyan University of Connecticut organized a Young Men's Republican Club to disseminate literature and incite men against the "aggressions of the Slave power." About half of the townships in the North were organized into Frémont Clubs. The greater part of the South refused to recognize a Frémont ticket. Peaceable Republican meetings in Southern states were broken up by "the Buchaneers." In Baltimore a crowd of about two thousand jeered and derided a group of forty Republicans who met to discuss the proposal to launch a state ticket. Threats of "Tar and feather them," and "Get a rail," were hurled at them; and the toughs caught one participant upon whose coat they took vengeance by cutting off its long tail. In another state a Methodist conference was dispersed by a mob of pro-slavery men. The presiding official was tarred and feathered, and an old man, who attempted to prevent the outrage, was shot. A book dealer of New Orleans was forced to leave the city for selling anti-slavery documents.

The most effective element in the strategy of the Democrats was the threat of secession if Frémont were to be elected. Toombs asserted that the election of the "Black Republican" candidate for President would mean the end of the Union. "The Buchaneers" considered the Republican party a purely sectional one.[69] For instance, George T. Curtis, writing July 10 to John J. Crittenden, who hoped Fillmore would win, said that "the first duty to be done is to defeat this sectional, dangerous, and unprincipled combination called the Republican party."[70] Senator John Slidell was equally emphatic. He was, says Professor Sears, the kingmaker among Buchanan's friends. In the heated moments of the campaign he wrote to the Democratic central committee in New Orleans that he did not "hesitate to declare that if Frémont be elected, the Union cannot and ought not to be preserved."[71] Benton not only refused to support his son-in-law for President, but

[68] *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Aug. 5, 1856.
[69] Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis: A Memoir* (2 vols., New York, 1890), I, 598.
[70] Coleman, *Life of John J. Crittenden*, II, 129-31.
[71] Sears, *John Slidell*, 135.

campaigned for Buchanan. He denounced the administration of Pierce with great severity. It had, he said in a speech in St. Louis, June 21, broken up all the political parties, violated the Missouri Compromise, prostituted the appointing power to political purposes, squandered the people's money in profligate waste, and neglected the territorial governments. How he could let fall such sledge-hammer blows on the heads of Democrats of one administration and support the same men, in a campaign for another, was beyond the comprehension of thousands of citizens. He told the St. Louisans that he was in the canvass for his country: "From first to last I have been for my country, and mean to continue for it." [72] The South, he thought, would never submit to the election of Frémont, consequently, he must refuse to support him though he was in his family.[73] Buchanan, he declared, should be elected as a national man to preserve the Union.[74]

The leading newspapers which supported the Democracy predicted disunion if the Republicans were successful. The Frémont Clubs and many Republican presses scoffed at the idea of disunion. Many Frémont newspapers copied the Southern threats and violent speeches in the hope that votes would be gained thereby. As the campaign progressed, however, the North began to think deeply. The Republican press tried to explain away Southern threats of disunion, but convinced that the South was in earnest, many leading Northerners voted for Fillmore, or for Buchanan, to avoid the execution of Mason's threat that there would be "immediate, absolute, eternal separation."

Blair and his committee on affiliations were successful in winning the radical Whigs and thousands of Know-nothings to the Republican cause. Republicanism, however, was repugnant to the pro-slavery Know-nothings. They could not be touched. Their candidates were Millard Fillmore and Andrew Jackson Donelson. Cassidy warned the Democrats against the snares of such a ticket. Donelson, he said, was "but a buzzard dropped from an eagle's nest," and the party hoped the people would look at the ticket like this: [75]

[72] *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* July 1, 1856.
[73] Nevins, *Frémont,* II, 505.
[74] *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* July 1, 1856.
[75] The *Atlas & Argus,* Feb. 20, 1856.

FOR (VICE) PRESIDENT
ANDREW JACKSON
donelson
of
TENNESSEE
AMERICAN k. n. CANDIDATE

A large faction of anti-slavery Know-nothings was too much concerned with immigration and religion to join the Republicans. Coalition tickets were unpopular among thousands of voters, and consequently, many Whigs like Rufus Choate joined the Democrats to insure the election of Buchanan. They were known as the Silver Gray Whigs of the North—each one "an eminently respectable gentleman who took the *National Intelligencer,* drank the best brandy and voted the Democratic ticket." [76] "To check this tendency, and to save Whig votes for Fillmore, a national Whig convention was held in Baltimore in mid-September." [77] Edward Bates of Missouri was chosen chairman. They promptly and unanimously ratified the Know-nothing ticket with Fillmore and Donelson at its head. Their platform was true in principle to the old Whig doctrine—a party must avoid geographical distinction.

The Republicans hoped and prayed for enough of a victory for Fillmore in the South to allow Frémont to slip into the White House in the general election. But if the victory could not be so complete, they hoped the final determination might rest with Congress. Blair wrote Donelson [78] that in the event of his failure to elect Frémont in Congress, he would support Fillmore as a "friend of the Union."

Blair believed himself largely responsible for the nomination of Frémont. He undoubtedly believed that his influence helped greatly to make the Republican party a formidable contestant in 1856. Alexander K. McClure said "he was more nearly the founder of the Republican party than any other one man. . . . He was not only the most prominent in the organization of the party, and in defining its policy, but if Francis P. Blair had not then been living John C. Frémont would not have been the Republican candidate for President in 1856. . . . I met Blair many

[76] Albert Gallatin Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade* (Cleveland, 1886), 204.
[77] Beveridge, *Lincoln,* II, 420.
[78] "Donelson Papers," in *Tenn. Hist. Mag.,* III, 291. Oct. 26, 1856.

times in the early days of the Republican organization. He was not a man of imposing presence nor specially attractive in manner. He lacked the finely chiseled face and outward intellectual signs of Gales, but he impressed all who came into conference with him with his masterly ability as a political leader. He was always incisive and unimpassioned in conversation."[79] He was determined to win the election, and he took the reins into his own hands as far as possible.[80] Mrs. Blair, whose keen eye saw through Frémont, had no faith in the much-heralded Pathfinder, and asked her husband why "he picked up that Turkey Gobbler for a candidate." "We will carry the West and North with him," answered Blair. Young Frank Blair of Missouri was a Frémont enthusiast from the beginning. Greeley claimed that Frank was the first to suggest Frémont for President. Montgomery was absorbed in the Dred Scott Case during the entire period of the campaign, and so permitted his father and brother to work without much assistance from him.

Blair believed that the Kansas issue was a prelude to disunion. He believed that the Nullifiers were determined to elect Buchanan to gain control of the government to nullify the power of the North and to promote the interests of a slave power to be set up in the South. Two things, he said, would be necessary to defeat their purposes. First, the Unionist Whigs of the South must form a nucleus about which men like Donelson, who felt that the Democracy had left them, could form a powerful party to work in harmony with the Republicans to save the Union. Secondly, the Republicans must win the election to preserve the Union.[81]

Blair respected Buchanan for his adroitness in politics. In ability Buchanan ranked with Polk and Pierce, or a little below them. There was nothing in his private life known to his opponents that could be used against him, unless Blair unearthed something. Blair had succeeded in 1852 in injuring the prospects of General Scott; but he kept silent on Buchanan's character until Buchanan's friends persuaded the simple-minded Andrew Jackson, junior, to make a statement which left the reader to infer that Blair had

[79] *Recollections of Half A Century*, 45.
[80] Martin, *Recollections of Elizabeth Benton Frémont*, 77.
[81] "Donelson Papers," in *Tenn. Hist. Mag.*, III, 291; Blair, *Gen. Jackson and James Buchanan*, Aug. 15, 1856; Blair, *To My Neighbors*, Sept. 17, 1856.

purloined the Jackson letters he had used in *A Voice From the Grave of Jackson.* That was manifestly unjust. Blair was not guilty of dishonesty. He deeply resented the aspersions which smacked so strongly of cheap politics. Andrew Jackson Donelson wrote to his son [82] that "Andrew Jackson has disgraced himself by his statement to help Buchanan at the expense of General Jackson's reputation and so has Judge Catron who has come out with a certificate that General Jackson was in favor of Buchanan for the Presidency in 1844. Catron has been a wire-puller for many years for Buchanan but is the victim at last of his own contrivances." Blair's answer was the strongest attack on Buchanan that was made during the campaign. It was entitled "Gen. Jackson and James Buchanan: To the Public," and published on August 15.

With the use of the Jackson letters and Colton's *Life of Clay,* Blair placed the responsibility for the origin of the so-called Clay-Adams corrupt bargain of 1825 squarely upon Buchanan's shoulders. If corruption and ulterior purposes existed in that episode, Buchanan, the would-be king-maker, was the guilty man. That was why Jackson appointed him minister to Russia—to keep him out of high political position in America and to satisfy the demands of Pennsylvania. Why had Buchanan interfered in the contested election of 1825? "He endeavored," said Blair, "by corrupt intrigue to bring about a coalition which would make one [Jackson] President, the other [Clay] secretary, with a view to the succession, and, establishing this double interest for himself as the representative of Pennsylvania, to open the way to his own advancement." He failed in his scheme, and also lost the confidence of both Clay and Jackson.

Buchanan's political career, continued Blair, was divided into "three epochs." He had opposed the War of 1812, at which time he was a fit subject for the Hartford Convention. He had made Clay and Jackson life-long enemies. And

> For years past he has identified himself with the nullifying party of the South, contributed to establish their organ and their power in the capital, and by this means making them masters of the whole slaveholding interest, which sways that section, and through it seeks

[82] "Donelson Papers," in *Tenn. Hist. Mag.,* III, 289-90; Sept. 27, 1856.

now to domineer over the North. He bargains now with the politicians who have banded together, and hope by concert in one section to enable the minority there to subject the majority in the other by dividing it.

For several reasons Blair had discontinued his friendly relations with Buchanan. They had differed in their views on the Texan question. After the disestablishment of the *Globe,* Blair discovered that Buchanan had assisted in that piece of party intrigue; and in 1848 Blair had become a Free-Soiler, while Buchanan remained a "Rotten." In 1849, after Blair had suffered defeat at the polls, Buchanan, who was greatly affected by the death of his sister, made overtures to Blair for a mutual restoration of their once happy friendship. Blair responded with a letter in which he gave Buchanan a good lecture and expressed his willingness to let by-gones be buried. Buchanan hurriedly answered the letter. He related that he had declined in 1843 to run for President in 1844 to enable Van Buren to carry Pennsylvania; he had changed the "printer of the laws from the Argus to the Atlas simply because the latter" was a friend of Silas Wright; he had admired Jackson as "the noblest Roman of them all"; and he realized that Jackson was "sustained by a Press [the *Globe*] which has not since been equalled & in this country has never been surpassed." As to the Texas question, which was the "Grecian horse that entered our Camp," he said, "I have always believed that had you been in sound health [88] we should have been saved from this calamity."

This renewal of friendship was destined to be short-lived. The Kansas-Nebraska Act broke it forever. The campaign of 1856 showed both men that they could never agree on political questions of the day. They drifted rapidly into a state of the bitterest enmity toward each other. "Old Buck," said Blair, in speaking of Buchanan; "Old Blair," said Buchanan.

The animosity which the leaders of the Democracy at Washington held for "Old Blair" was almost unbounded. In September, while the heat of the campaign was high, a crowd of Washingtonians went out to Silver Spring to hold a rally for Buchanan. They camped on Blair's own soil within sight of his home. It was a discourteous procedure, if not insulting. Blair

[88] Blair was ill in bed at the time Van Buren wrote his Texas letter.

retaliated with his best letter of the campaign: "To My Neighbors." It and the letter on "Jackson and Buchanan" were published in pamphlet form and distributed widely as campaign literature. The Young Republican Clubs were raising "Liberty Poles"; the Democrats raised a "Hickory Pole" and left it standing for Blair to see each day. Blair describes it:

> For one portion of the lofty decoration which floats over the scene of my humble employment, I am really grateful. It is the flag of the Union, brought, I am told, from the Navy Yard of the metropolis. It may have displayed its constellation of stars at the mast-head of some noble seventy-four, and shed its glory over the great deep, where the proudest triumphs of our flag have been achieved. It now spreads its folds to the inland breeze from an hickory a hundred feet high! If its flag-staff had been elevated upon the summit of this noble tree as it grew and flourished, with all its leafy honors, on its *free mount* that overlooks the headlong fall of the Anacosta, it would have been a fit emblem to awaken recollections of the illustrious chief with whose glory its name is associated. But it was cut down at the instance of the city officials—its branches lopped and dragged from its wild and airy height along the dusty thoroughfares—hoisted by ropes on the highway—and crowned with the skull and horns of an old Buck! There the imagination associates it with the idea of a death's head and gibbet.
>
> What an emblem to be exalted above the flag of the country, and on the hickory tree, which has given its name to one of its greatest heroes! Of all the animals the deer is the most timid, and although the head of the buck is at one season of the year armed with a multitude of points as sharp as spears, it never confronts an enemy that it can escape with flying feet. The grand antlers are the mere emblem of warlike prowess, and evidence only of that species of gallantry that distinguishes the stag, and gives to a class of gentry of our species the name of bucks, young or old.
>
> The old buck is a sort of old bachelor, like his fellow of the woods, addicted to no mate, and whose insignia of horns, have, time out of mind, been held to characterize his pursuits. Is this an ensign to be exalted above that of the country, and chosen to exemplify the virtues of one who aspires to the Chief Magistracy? If the crowning virtue be attributed to the coronet which distinguishes the old buck's head, and which now takes the place of the liberty cap on democratic banners, it should be remembered that it is a virtue that comes and goes with the seasons. An old buck's honors begin to bud and grow in the balmy springtime—they are in the velvet in June, and throughout the summer. This smooth covering is slipped off in October. In November

their vitality is blighted, and in March the crown of weather-beaten antlers drops from the old buck's brow, and he hides, droops in solitude, abandoned by all his fellows. The hunters of the Alleghanies and of our frontiers will apply this piece of natural history, and interpret its augury.

Some of the speakers called Blair an "arch traitor," and invoked the lightning of the heavens to do him justice. He was absent on duty for his party at the time, but his neighbors effectively defended him.

In his letter he undertook to set forth his views to his neighbors, and at the same time produce a Republican document. He stated it as his belief that:[84]

1. The rump of the body of Nullifiers led by Atchison, Butler, Mason, and Hunter, laid a deep plot to repeal the Missouri Compromise to extend slave territory to the Pacific and south to include Cuba. The Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Cincinnati platform were his proofs.

2. Buchanan is a *"mere machine"* for the effectuation of their aims.

3. "Charleston, South Carolina, is the headquarters of the oligarchy which originated the design of dissolving the Union, to bring under its subjection the laborer of the white race as well as of the black race. The power seated in Charleston is as absolute as that of Paris in France, and it aims to extend over the whole South . . . the same commanding influence. . . . It is boldly avowed in Charleston *that the separation of the states is the great object, whatever may be the fate of the struggle for Kansas.*"

4. The great mass of southern people are not in sympathy with the disunion sentiments of the Secessionists.

5. If the Nullifiers win with Buchanan and make a slave state of Kansas, they will "turn their arms towards Mexico." (See the Cincinnati platform.)

6. "I hold that the strongest bar against disunion is the preservation of the territories from slave settlement."

7. The Ordinance of 1787 and the Missouri Compromise were sacred. The breach between them which "has brought on an appeal to force civil war between the free and slave states is impending, and nothing can avert it but a return to the principle of compromise, and of good faith. It is on this ground that the Republican party has taken its stand."

8. The threats of disunion are made by leaders. The poor whites of the South and the freemen of the North cannot afford to rally to a

[84] *To My Neighbors,* Sept. 17, 1856.

party of disunion. "The Republican party directs its efforts to the restoration of the soil dedicated to free labor," to the men who need it. Fremont pledges his aid to the man without land. He looks to a homestead law giving to every actual settler one hundred and sixty acres of land on condition of occupancy and cultivation.

9. "It is pretended that if slavery is not admitted into the territories, it is a wrong done to the citizens of the South, who are precluded from taking their property with them, while the citizens of the North, are not so precluded. This is not true. The citizens of the South, as well as the North, may take their property with them, but cannot take also the peculiar laws of their section, and which converts this property into an institution, to make it available. The local laws of New York authorize every citizen to convert his capital, consisting of stocks or money, into a bank, and issue paper upon it, and lend it out at seven per cent.; but no citizen of New York can carry his bank, with the privileges to use it, as given by the state laws, into Kansas."

10. "Slavery is a local institution." It is more than a domestic institution—it is a voting institution, and a monopolizing institution, absorbing sovereignty over both the state government and the soil. It can exist nowhere without law. There is no law for it in the territories, and no state can send its laws with it, to establish it as such.

11. Buchanan endorses the policy of Pierce in the Kansas question. To elect him is to support slavery in Kansas by "right of conquest."

12. It is an "audacious libel" to state that the Republican party is an abolition party. "It abjures the idea of inter-meddling with slavery where it exists, or interfering with it in any state which may hereafter establish it. It insists only on the right of Congress to legislate on the subject in the territories—a right exerted under the confederacy, recognized and established by the constitution and effectuated by acts of Congress, from the foundation of the government to the present hour."

13. Squatter sovereignty is a "mockery of all law."

14. Not a man in the Pittsburg Republican Convention looked to the Republican party to abolish slavery in the slave states. "As a member of the Republican Convention, I can say with confidence that, nothing could be more revolting than the general manumission of the slaves in the South, and putting them on a level with the white race."

15. Liberation of the blacks under existing circumstances would be ruinous to their owners, fatal to the negroes, and detrimental to the poor whites.

16. How slavery is to be disposed of remains to be worked out by the states as Christianity and civilization advance. Amalgamation with the whites is impossible. Colonization may be the solution.

17. "My neighbors know that my declarations against sweeping abolition are sincere. They know that I own slaves, some inherited and

some that have begged their way into my house from the slave-pen; and while they know that my course in submitting to this encumbrance is characterized by humanity, they have proof in my conduct, that so far from using it to degrade my own flesh and blood in the persons of those who toil with their hands for a living, and to bring them to the condition to which the *democracy,* speaking through the Richmond press, would assign them, that my best efforts have been to counteract this tendency of the system. My strongest sympathies are for the laboring white man."

18. "My feelings and judgment alike actuate me to fight the battle for the rights of the white cultivator of the soil and the white mechanics against all who would pursue him into the new territories with the institution which drives them out from those 'little communities,' at the head of which reigns a master, who, with his fellows, the organs of democracy in the South tell us, constitute the state."

The publication of this letter gave the Democracy a twinge, but Buchanan refused to answer. He had endorsed the platform and that was enough.[85] He was too adroit a politician to be drawn into controversies with individuals of the opposition. Good news which was then coming from the elections in Iowa, Maine, and Missouri, gave Blair hope for victory. Just at that time Fillmore's supporters were "very confident of carrying Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Maryland and California." They expected the whole South to go for Fillmore if Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania held presidential elections in October) gave Buchanan a minority vote.[86] The Democracy was desperately making charges. And so Blair banteringly wrote Rives of the *Globe*:[87]

If I have brought your Buck "to piss his tallow" it is all over with him—& really I think he is brought to that point— Of all men living I would prefer seeing him disappointed in his anxious pursuit of the presidency.

Another reason gave Blair cause for sanguineness. The Black Republicans in Missouri were wild with joy. On August 5, Frank had telegraphed the editor of the Chicago *Democrat:* "I am elected by one thousand majority, certain." In the evening after the election a crowd of Republicans climbed the bluffs above the

[85] Treat MSS. Buchanan to Treat, Aug. 15, 1856.
[86] "Donelson Papers," in *Tenn. Hist. Mag.,* III, 89-90. A. J. Donelson to Lieut. A. J. Donelson, Jr., Sept. 27, 1856.
[87] Blair-Rives MSS. Sept 23, 1856

city to kindle a huge bonfire in honor of Frank Blair's success. Several cords of wood were piled high, and on top of it were placed several barrels of tar. As the flames mounted they cast a bright light for miles. The hot tar ran in rivulets down the side of the bluff, blazing as it ran, and creating a beautiful effect for those who gazed at it from afar. Skyrockets whizzed through the air, and cheer after cheer went up for Frémont, Bissel, Benton, and Blair. The New York *Tribune* heralded the victory as a "Glorious Triumph," and the Chicago *Times* greeted the news with "All Hail, St. Louis"!

The St. Louis *Democrat* characterized the political battle which Frank had fought as a tremendously hard one. It was a fight between individuals. He was "known and recognized as the advocate of the rights of the working men of St. Louis." To fight such a man his opponents resorted to ridicule and abuse. No *gentleman,* they declared, would advocate the performance of services by white men which slaves should perform! He unflinchingly advocated a Free-Kansas and the non-extension of slavery. He called Pierce a jackass; he said Buchanan would follow the dictation of the rump Nullifiers, and he supported Frémont for President, Benton for governor, all while he ran on a Democratic ticket. He displayed firmness and nerve under tremendous pressure. An admirer exclaimed: "Never did man bear himself more nobly than Mr. Blair has done throughout the present contest."

The Democracy tried to defeat him by drawing the Germans and Irish Catholics from his support. They established a newspaper for that purpose, and made a desperate attempt to divide the voting strength, which was against their man Reynolds, by urging Whigs to vote for Know-nothing Mr. Kennett. It was all in vain. Black Republican—"Benton Democrat" Blair won the election by a safe majority.

The Democracy lamented its defeat. St. Louis had gone Black Republican, and to the extremity of electing a Black Republican delegation to the legislature. Nothing could have done it, declared the Democrats, but a lavish use of gold!—an excuse for a defeated party.

The significance of Frank Blair's success was variously stated. The Republicans declared it meant that St. Louis would no longer

be dominated by the insolent Slave Oligarchy. The Democrats recognized it as proof that St. Louis was "hostile to the institutions of the State." They warned her to commence purging herself if she wanted favors from the state legislature. The New York *Tribune* expected Frank to be one of the ablest supporters of his party in Congress.

Benton, on the other hand, ran third for governor. His "sacrifice battle" came too late in his career for him to retrieve himself from former defeats. He traveled in a carriage or on horseback for about twelve hundred miles over the state and made forty speeches. He urged Benton, Buchanan, and the Union upon the voters in speeches that lasted from one to two hours each. At last when the votes were counted he found the Claiborne F. Jackson element of the Democracy seated firmly at Jefferson City. Now past seventy-four years of age and dying of cancer, he retired to Washington, somewhat dispirited, but determined to undertake the stupendous task of compiling his "Abridgement of the Debates of Congress." The field in Missouri was left for a battling ground between Frank Blair and the pro-slavery elements.

When the campaign was over, Frank went to Silver Spring for a much-needed rest, and to confer with his father and brother. He assured them that he could unite the Know-nothings, the Free-Soil Democrats, and the Republicans in the Missouri legislature to return Benton to the Senate of the United States if Frémont were elected. Blair had been in "an exceedingly off humor" with Benton "for his course, in Missouri, in rallying his party to put down Frank's design to nominate Frémont at the State Convention preceding that at Cincinnati & hazarding Frank's defeat by nominating a ticket in St. Louis against Frank's avowed opinion & which he was obliged by his opponents to proclaim on every stump—but I am now anxious that he should retrieve his fortunes" to help Frémont.[88]

Frank was at Silver Spring only a few days before he returned to the field of activity where he was needed. The election was seen to hinge on the outcome in Pennsylvania. There the contest was limited to two state parties. The Republicans sent their speakers in relays. They spoke in every town of importance. The

[88] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Sept. 22, 1856.

Democrats poured in money and men to carry the state for its favorite son. The Republicans begged for money, but their national organization was new and straitened for funds. It could not satisfy their wants. Wall Street "cotton" bankers and brokers sent huge sums to the Democracy. The slow-minded Pennsylvania Dutch preferred Buchanan and peace to Frémont and revolution. Excited throngs jammed the streets of Philadelphia to hear the news on election night. For two days the results were in doubt, but finally it was determined that Buchanan had won by a majority of less than 3,000 votes. Indiana went Democratic and Ohio Republican on the same day that Pennsylvania held her election. These results were depressing to the Republicans.

While the Democratic press gloated over a coming victory, the Republicans battled on with what courage they could muster. Greeley continued to urge the Young Republican Clubs to place a copy of the *Life of Frémont* and Sumner's *Speech* in the hands of every voter. Make a poll of every voter, keep a record of his predilections for President, he insisted, and waste no money on fireworks, sprees, music, but buy documents, employ speakers, educate the people, and do not count the result until the polls close.[89]

The great Republican rallies were continued until the last day. Speakers were worn out with incessant speechmaking. The bands played on, and banners hung across the streets announcing that "We Are A Buck-Hunting"; "We Follow the Pathfinder"; and since Mrs. Frémont was popularly known, enthusiasts hung banners emblazoned with the words: "Jessie Bent-on Being Free." On the other hand, the Southern Democrats poured forth vituperation on Frémont and the Republicans. Governor Wise of Virginia said to an audience during the campaign:[90]

> Fremont is nothing. (Cheers.) He is less than nothing in my estimation. (Enthusiastic cheering.) He is but a mere personification of Black Republicanism, the bearer of the black flag. (Cheers.) . . .
>
> Tell me, if the hoisting of the Black Republican flag in the hands of an adventurer, born illegitimately in a neighboring State, if not ill-begotten in this very city—tell me, if the hoisting of the black flag over you by a Frenchman's bastard, while the arms of civil war already clashing, is not to be deemed an overt act and declaration of war?

[89] *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Oct. 3, 1856. [90] Nevins, *Frémont*, II, 508-509.

To the last day "bleeding Kansas" and the threat of secession were the primary issues. On election day last appeals were made to the voters. One influential newspaper placed at the head of its first column this appeal in verse of which the first, third, fifth, and sixth stanzas are quoted: [91]

There's a wail on the Western prairie,
A cry of wild despair;
And from Liberty's wounded Eagle
A shriek breaks on the air.

There's a band of soulless traitors
Who Freedom would enchain,
Who would sell their country's honor
For selfish power and gain.

Will ye barter the birthright given,
And sell your souls for gold?
Will ye prove your hearts are darker
Than the brow of him that's sold?

Hark! the voices of Freemen answer—
And bravely bear them on;
And the East and the West are waiting
To shout "The Vict'ry's won!"

When the votes were counted Buchanan stood first with 174 electoral votes to 114 for Frémont and 8 for Fillmore. The Democracy had polled 1,838,169 popular votes. Frémont came a strong second with 1,341,264, and Fillmore last with 874,534. Only four slave states gave Frémont recognition. In Delaware he had 308, in Virginia 291, in Maryland 281, and in Kentucky 314 popular votes. The lines between slavery and free-soilism were drawn tighter. The victorious Democracy was ready to go to Washington with a President and a majority in the House of Representatives.

Was it well that Frémont was defeated? Rhodes says: "Considering the weakness of Frémont's character, which later years brought to light, it was fortunate he was not elected President." [92] Professor Nevins says that if we assume that civil war would have resulted as a consequence of the election of Frémont, it was a

[91] *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Nov. 4, 1856. [92] *United States,* II, 236.

blessing that he was defeated. "At no stage of his career," says Nevins, "did Frémont exhibit the qualities indispensable to the head of a nation racked by civil strife. . . . But had there been no secession, Frémont would have made a better President than Buchanan." [93]

Although defeated, the Republicans emerged as a party. They absorbed the Whigs and Know-nothings who did not enter the old Democracy. In that Blair saw his efforts bear rich fruit. The immediate results were discomforting. He was with Frémont on election day and night. Frémont took his defeat cheerfully and calmly, but on the next morning at the breakfast table, Blair "broke down, crushed with the bitterness of defeat."

It was over a month past election day before he wrote to Van Buren. Finally on Christmas Eve Blair wrote to Van Buren as follows: [94]

I am afraid you will suppose that I have been lost since last month in that sort of trance which confounded the fallen angels when "hurled headlong from the precipice of heaven." Milton says they were stretched nine days, utterly mute, on their lake of burning brimstone & gave not the least signs of life, such was the discomfiture!— If you ascribe my silence to the late overthrow of my party, you must suppose our perdition worse than Satan's— For one of the Castaways, I must confess that I have been very quiet since the 5 Nov. but I assure you, it comes not of having tumbled from a dizzy height, nor from the sad plight of my comrades nor the melancholy circumstances of the abode to which we are consigned— On the contrary I have been consoling myself in very comfortable indolent quarters, basking in the light of Pine log fires, with reflexions on the happy escape I have made through the late defeat. What a fortunate remission for an old lazy, unambitious man,—unfit to shine at Levees—unfit to make a figure even at an official dinner—& utterly incapable of the labors of any Department of the Govt to get back to pleasant retirement leaving it to those who made the trouble in the country "to knit up its ravell'd sleave of care"—? If we had succeeded, I should have been engaged but in one business during the 4 years— Everybody who was as unfit for public duty as myself but did not know it, as well would have plied me with letters & personal applications to beg office for them & endorse all their recommendations & carry themselves & their papers up the back stairs—for the good of the country, as my heated imagination sug-

[93] *Fremont*, II, 517-18.
[94] Van Buren MSS. Blair to Van Buren, Dec. 24, 1856.

gested I entered on this course of humiliation, but if Buchanan will arrest the flagitious schemes of the Nullifiers who seek only to run their slave line as far north as possible & then quit the Union, I will forgive him his doughfaced Jesuit life, and acknowledge myself his debtor for a special deliverance as well as that which he shall give to the nation.

CHAPTER XXII

Dred Scott: The Battle of the Legalists

The decision of Chief Justice Taney was one of error of judgment rather than one of breach of trust.—Hodder.

Transylvania University trained many young men for the law, young men who later gained prominence as lawyers, judges, and statesmen. Among them was Montgomery Blair. He had the privilege of studying with the best teachers west of the Appalachians. And, like Clay, Jackson, and Benton, he migrated westward to find a suitable location in which to begin his practice and build a reputation. St. Louis offered the best opportunities of any of the Western cities except Chicago. The former was not only growing in population, but she was a progressive and aspiring young city that hoped to utilize her advantages of being the gateway to the Far West. Blair developed rapidly under the wing of Benton, remaining always militantly independent and firm in his faith in Jacksonian Democracy.

Having scholarly inclinations, he was different from many Western lawyers of his day. He continued to read and study throughout his life. His familiarity with history made him less bold in his statements than was characteristic of many Westerners. Like his father, he knew well his Greek and Roman history, and he knew as thoroughly as any layman of his day the details of Napoleonic history. Few laymen knew the history of his own country better than he did. His sympathetic nature found enjoyment in the perusal of poetry. Brooks in his *Washington in Lincoln's Time* says he was "rated as the best-read man in Lincoln's cabinet," and I have no doubt of the truth of that assertion.[1] His honesty and integrity were not questioned except by bitter enemies in times of great stress when good judgment suffered. His habits

[1] Noah Brooks, *Washington in Lincoln's Time* (New York, 1895), 35.

were disciplined according to his duties, and he expected his household to live and be governed by moral precepts and efficient regulations. But he did not allow his desire for efficiency to interfere with that freedom which is necessary to happiness.

His amiability and bland manners soon won a host of friends in Missouri. The prestige of Benton, of course, did much for the young lawyer. His voice was pitched too high to please the ear. And that defect he had to fight against all his life, whether in court or on the platform. But the West had one yardstick by which it measured its men: "What can you do?" Capable, diligent and determined, he soon rose to power and influence in his adopted state.

He began in the local courts of St. Louis. Land cases were plentiful as a result of old Spanish claims and a growing city. Boundary claims were numerous. No metropolis or village was wanting in criminal cases. But it appears that Blair preferred civil cases, especially those in which land was involved. He later learned Spanish to enable him to deal with cases in the Southwest. His briefs of later years include those of the "Survey of the Rancho Santiago De Santa Ana," and "Las Animas Grant." There are dozens of these briefs of as many cases, but they have little intrinsic value to make them interesting today. It was during the late forties that St. Louisans became deeply interested in the proposed construction of a railroad to the Pacific Ocean. The era of railroad building in the West was soon ushered in. Blair seized the opportunity to familiarize himself with corporation law and was consequently secured by different railroads to conduct their cases in court. The Southern Pacific, the Wheeling, the Parkersburg, and Cincinnati Transportation Company, the Baltimore and Ohio, and others engaged his services at one time or another.

His legalistic mind required only a "lawyer's voice" to win for him an enviable place as one of the country's foremost lawyers. It seems to have been a Blair failing to have a high pitched voice that "cracked" under a strain. Frank overcame it to a considerable degree, and when Montgomery warmed to his subject his hearers often forgot about the defect. He appealed to reason with cool logic. Adjectives were omitted and clarity was his object. His arguments and speeches were cogent and drove

straight to the point. He spoke at length offering citations and reasons one after another. In spite of his geniality, his courteous and amiable manner, his learning and experience, he never succeeded in overcoming that which appeared to be awkwardness when he stood before men.

He was in partnership twice after he left Benton's office in St. Louis. His good friend, Franklin Dick of St. Louis, formed a partnership with him in Washington after the hectic days of reconstruction. For some years Blair and his son, Woodbury, were in partnership in the same city. His three sons, Woodbury, Gist, and Montgomery, junior, became lawyers, and still have their offices in Washington.

Montgomery Blair used the greater portion of his time during the campaign of 1856 in the preparation of his argument for the plaintiff in the notorious Dred Scott Case.

Dred Scott, according to a pamphlet written by his friends, was a pure negro born in Virginia of ancestors from Africa. He belonged to Captain Peter Blow who, dying in 1831, left him to his daughter Elizabeth. Dr. John Emerson, a surgeon in the United States Army and stationed at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, bought Dred and took him in 1834 to Fort Armstrong, Rock Island, Illinois. The fort was abandoned in 1836, and Dr. Emerson was transferred to Fort Snelling in the Wisconsin Territory. Illinois was a portion of the Northwest Territory in which slavery was supposedly prohibited by the Ordinance of 1787, and by subsequent acts of the state. A portion of the Wisconsin Territory was in a part of the Louisiana Purchase in which slavery was prohibited by the Missouri Compromise of 1820.[2] While at Fort Snelling, Dred was permitted to marry Harriet, another slave whom Dr. Emerson had bought. In 1838 Dr. Emerson moved back to St. Louis and took his slaves with him. Just before they reached the parallel of 36° 30′ on their way down the Mississippi River, a daughter, Eliza, was born to Harriet and Dred, and another daughter, Lizzie, was born to them some months later at Jefferson Barracks.

Dr. Emerson was sent from St. Louis to serve in the second

[2] F. H. Hodder, "Some Phases of the Dred Scott Case," in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XVI, No. 1, June, 1929.

Seminole War. His wife was left in St. Louis with her father and his slaves were placed in the care of her brother-in-law, Colonel Henry Bainbridge, who kept them at Jefferson Barracks. Later Dred was hired out at five dollars a month with the understanding that the money was to be paid to Mrs. Emerson, or to her father, Alexander Sanford, her agent. In 1842, Dr. Emerson was honorably discharged from service, and died in 1843 at Davenport in the Iowa Territory. He willed his property to his wife, except for the slaves of whom there was no mention. They might have been emancipated by law at any time had proper action been taken, but they were left largely to the care of Taylor Blow, son of Peter Blow.

Dred Scott was a lazy, shiftless negro worth about five dollars a month as a laborer. Four months before the Wilmot Proviso was introduced in Congress and before the agitation against the extension of slavery in the territories was rampant, Taylor Blow instituted a suit in the lower courts of Missouri to secure the freedom of Scott and his family on the grounds that they were free by the constitutional right of having lived in free territories. He was opposed to slavery, and quite naturally believed that Dred should have the income from his labor for the support of himself, his wife, and children. Because eight similar cases tried in the Missouri Supreme Court between 1822 and 1837 had resulted in the freedom of negroes who had lived a while in free territories, Professor Hodder does not believe that Blow expected any trouble in obtaining the freedom of the Scott family. There seems to have been no other motive, says Professor Hodder, on the part of Blow, than to see the Scott family freed: [8]

Scott's case in the state courts dragged through six years. In the first trial in the Circuit Court of St. Louis County, judgment was against Scott, but a new trial was granted, and in the second trial judgment was given for Scott. The case was then taken on writ of error to the State Supreme Court. It was in this court that the case first assumed a political complexion. The struggle over the territory acquired from Mexico and the Compromise of 1850 had revived the slavery controversy and in particular had raised the question of the power of Congress over slavery in the territories. In March, 1852, the Supreme Court of Missouri decided against Scott by a vote of two

[8] Hodder, *op. cit.*

judges against one. The majority of the Court based their opinion upon the ground that the laws of other states and territories had no extra-territorial effect in Missouri, except such as Missouri saw fit to give them. They repudiated the eight Missouri precedents in Scott's favor upon the ground that "times had changed" and that the free states, by obstructing the return of fugitive slaves, refused to recognize the law of slave states. The dissenting judge, Justice Gamble, thought that the earlier precedents ought to be followed.

Meantime Mrs. Emerson moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, where she married an abolitionist by the name of Dr. C. C. Chaffee, also a Know-nothing Congressman from 1855 to 1859. The Scott negroes were transferred by a "fictitious sale" to Mrs. Chaffee's brother, John F. A. Sanford, an executor of Dr. Emerson's estate. Sanford had married a daughter of Pierre Chouteau of St. Louis, had made a fortune in the fur trade, and had moved to New York City where he was engaged in the business of financing Western railroads. At this stage Roswell M. Field, a prominent St. Louis attorney, brought suit against Sanford for the freedom of the Scott family in the Federal Court of St. Louis.

Sanford appeared in St. Louis to answer the summons in the suit. He entered a plea in abatement to the jurisdiction of the court denying that Dred was a citizen of Missouri. Field countered that plea with the filing of a demurrer. The District Judge decided on the demurrer in Scott's favor, but the attorneys decided that "an agreed case should be made up by them." The case was continued on the original statement of facts to test the question of whether a slave once resident in a free territory was constitutionally made free. On the ground of the statement of facts, Judge Wells of the District Court, "refused to instruct the jury that law was with Dred Scott as formally requested by his attorney, Field; and, instead, instructed the jury that the law was with Sanford, as formally requested by his attorney, Garland. Since this instruction was the reverse of the Court's ruling for Scott on the demurrer, it is obvious that from the first the whole case was arranged for appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, where it was promptly taken on a writ of error." [4]

Henry Blow signed Scott's bond for his appeal to the Supreme

[4] Beveridge, *Lincoln,* II, 457.

Court. Blow belonged to the radicals in St. Louis who composed the Republican party in 1856 and 1860. At that time he was a friend to the Blairs. Friends of Scott published a pamphlet in which the proceedings of the District Court in regard to his case were printed, and an appeal to the anti-slavery people was made for sympathy and legal aid to fight his case: [5]

> My fellow men, can any of you help me in my day of trial? Will nobody speak for me at Washington, even without hope of other reward than the blessings of a poor black man and his family. I do not know. I can only pray that some good heart will be moved by pity to do that for me which I cannot do for myself; and that if the right is on my side it may be so declared by the high court to which I have appealed.

The political storm over the Kansas-Nebraska Act was soon raging. Five days before President Pierce signed the Act, Field wrote to Montgomery Blair asking him to act as Dred Scott's attorney before the Supreme Court. But Blair had gone to California to complete the settlement of his deceased brother's estate (James Blair's estate) and to have the body returned to Silver Spring. Field wrote again, December 24, 1854, begging that Montgomery or some other lawyer in Washington undertake the case: [6]

> If you or any other professional gentleman at W. should feel interest enough in the case as to give it such attention as to bring it to a hearing & decision by that court, the cause of humanity may perhaps be subserved! at all events a much disputed question would be settled by the highest court in the nation.

According to Blair, Field was not interested in politics. He desired a peaceful settlement of the much agitated question of slavery.[7] "The question involved" in the Scott Case, wrote Field, "is the much vexed one whether the removal by the master of his slave to Illinois or Wisconsin works absolute emancipation of the slave." [8]

Blair was in a quandary as to whether to accept the responsibility or reject it. Following the custom of the Blair sons, he con-

[5] The Case of *Dred Scott in the Supreme Court of the United States, December Term, 1854.*
[6] *Dred Scott Collection,* in the Library of the Missouri Historical Society.
[7] *National Intelligencer,* Dec. 24, 1856.
[8] *Dred Scott Coll.* Field to Blair, Dec. 24, 1854.

ferred with his father at Silver Spring and found him in an urgent mood. He then asked the editor of the *National Era* what he thought would be advisable. The editor, Dr. Bailey, was enthusiastic. The two men agreed on a method of raising the expenses. Blair gave his services as attorney gratis, and the editor promised to raise the funds to meet the remaining costs.[9]

Not until after the election of 1856 did Montgomery feel constrained to explain why he accepted the invitation of Field to become the attorney for Dred Scott in the Supreme Court of the United States. Charges that the suit was contrived to influence the election were coming from the press. He published a letter in reply in the *National Intelligencer* on December 24, 1856, which was in part as follows:

> In Missouri, and generally, I believe, in the Southern States, almost every lawyer feels bound to give his services when asked in such a case arising in the community to which he belongs. Having risen at that bar, considering myself still a citizen of Missouri, although for the present practising my profession at the seat of government, I did not hesitate to become the counsel of the plaintiff here, as I should have done there.

This letter has the ring of truth in it. He acknowledges that he "perceived that the cause involved important issues, which might possibly be engulphed in the great political controversy then just emerging in relation to the power of Congress over the territory of the United States. . . ." No discerning lawyer could have failed to understand that. His reputation as a lawyer of national rank was to be established. Frank, as in other cases, very probably urged him to undertake this one for the advertising to be gained therefrom. It must be remembered, however, that the Blairs were determined to stop the extension of slavery.

The case was docketed on December 30, 1855. On January 7, 1856, Field wrote a long letter to Montgomery Blair suggesting the mode of procedure, but it was too late to prepare for the trial before the Court adjourned for the spring recess.[10] The case was consequently delayed until the next term of court. During the interim Blair tried to engage an eminent lawyer to help him argue the case. This he thought necessary when he found that the able

[9] White, *Life of Lyman Trumbull*, 83. [10] Hodder, *op. cit.*

Henry S. Geyer of Missouri and the brilliant Reverdy Johnson of Maryland were arrayed against him. Those men were experienced in law and politics. Johnson had been recently Attorney-General of the United States, and Geyer had defeated Benton for the Senatorship. It was a big undertaking to confront them in the court room. He first begged a prominent lawyer in the South to aid him, but in vain; he then turned to the North with ill success until George Ticknor Curtis, brother of Justice Curtis of the United States Supreme Court, volunteered to give the constitutional argument in the case. Curtis did not volunteer until after Montgomery had given his first argument. The men whom he approached declined because, they said, their actions might reflect on the party with which they were affiliated, or because of previous engagements, or because they did not have time to prepare their arguments.[11]

Blair appeared alone for Scott in the first series of arguments which lasted from February 11 to 14, 1856. Geyer and Johnson appeared for the defendant. Both Geyer and Johnson voluntarily entered the contest because of their convictions. Johnson was an old line Whig and a staunch pro-slavery man. His strong conviction that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional caused him to take the part which he did.

Blair submitted his brief with a letter to Judge R. W. Wells of the Circuit Court, before whom the case was last tried. It reached Wells on January 31. Wells was still badly shaken up over his narrow escape from death in the Gasconade River bridge disaster of November 1, 1855. Mrs. Wells was still shuddering at the thought of traveling on railroads.[12] Otherwise it was quite probable that Judge Wells would have been in Washington where Blair could have conferred with him before the case was completed.[13]

Blair had assumed that Judge Wells made his decision on two grounds. Judge Wells advised him to consider a third "ground"

[11] *National Intelligencer,* Dec. 24, 1856. M. Blair to the Editors.

[12] This disaster occurred on the Pacific Railroad, then being pushed to completion between St. Louis and Kansas City. The abutments and stone piers of the bridge across the Gasconade gave way when an excursion train with ten passenger cars filled with people crashed through the bridge into the river. Many noted persons were among the excursionists, some of whom were killed.—Violett, *op. cit.,* 239.

[13] *Dred Scott Collection.* Wells to M. Blair, Feb. 12, 1856.

on which the Circuit Court decided against the plaintiff, namely, that a state has the right to determine for itself whether the employment of its slaves in another state affected their legal status. He pointed out that the United States Supreme Court usually followed the decisions of the state courts in the interpretation of state laws. He cited the case of Strader *et al. vs.* Graham in which the Supreme Court held that a negro taken from Kentucky to Ohio and returned was still a slave. He believed the Dred Scott case was a similar one, but as to his personal feelings, he wished to see Scott made free.

The Wells letter reached Blair after he had made his first argument. The case was opened on Monday, February 11, 1856. A few newspapers recognized it as one which involved political questions of importance. "They are first, whether a free black man is a citizen of the United States, so as to be competent to sue in the Courts of the United States; second, whether a slave carried voluntarily by his master into a free State and returning voluntarily with his master to his home, is a free man by virtue of such temporary residence; thirdly, whether the eighth Section of the Missouri Act of 1820, prohibiting slavery north of latitude 36° 30′, is constitutional or not." On the whole, the press was little disturbed over the Dred Scott case. Its existence was hardly noticed before February of 1856. The attention of politicians and an aroused electorate was directed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the forthcoming presidential campaign. Much space was given in print to the Crimean War then in progress. Calls for the National Republican convention to be held in Pittsburgh, and the National Know-nothing convention to convene in Philadelphia had been made before Blair completed his brief. His father's attention was preoccupied with his address to be delivered in Pittsburgh. Frank was sweating under a barrage at the hands of the old line Democracy in Missouri. Benton was riding a high horse of political folly, and Van Buren had announced that he would break political affiliations with the Blairs.

Blair argued before the Court that Dred was entitled to freedom on the grounds of the benefits conferred upon him by the constitution of Illinois, and upon his residence at Fort Snelling where the Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery.

It has already been mentioned that he had sent a copy of his brief to Field, and had written him twice about it. Field delayed his answer until March 12, saying that: [14]

> I have delayed writing to you in the expectation that the case would soon be decided & that I should have the opportunity of congratulating you on the result. As the Court has taken its long recess without coming to a decision, I will not delay longer the expression of my gratification at the able manner in which you have presented the questions to the Court. I entirely concur with you in the opinion that there could be no doubt about the issue if factious politicks did not mingle in the counsels of the court.

The attorneys for the defendant contended that the restriction in the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional, and consequently Dred's residence at Fort Snelling did not affect his status as a slave. Johnson eloquently and heatedly maintained that Dred had offered no resistance when he was returned to Missouri with Dr. Emerson, making it appear that he had knowingly and willingly acquiesced in his bondage. He "took care to withhold any expression of opinion either as to the ability of the alleged slave to resist when he had always been accustomed to obey, or of his knowledge of his rights, when at Rock Island or Fort Snelling." [15]

The public expected a decision from the Court within a fortnight. James S. Pike wrote to the *Tribune* that speculation had it that the Court would affirm the decision of the Circuit Court principally upon the pretext that Dred voluntarily returned to St. Louis, by which act the authority of Dr. Emerson was restored as his master. A few days later Pike wrote that indications were that a direct issue would probably be evaded by holding that Dred, being a colored man, was not a citizen of Missouri, and therefore could not bring action properly. "This judgment would deny the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and possibly prevent the expression of dissenting opinions on the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise; an effort will be made to get a positive decree of some sort, and in that event, there is some hope of aid from the Southern members of the Court." [16]

[14] *Dred Scott Collection,* Missouri Historical Society.
[15] N. Y. *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Feb. 22, 1856.
[16] N. Y. *Tribune,* Feb. 28, 1856. Quoted by Warren, *The Supreme Court,* III, 5.

Pike was surprisingly right. The subject of jurisdiction became an issue. After two consultations of the Court in April, it divided on that question. Chief Justice Taney, Wayne, Daniel, Nelson, and Curtis considered the "jurisdictional point as to citizenship" of Dred as one properly before them, and McLean, Catron, Campbell, and Grier dissented. Nelson was not certain that he was right and asked that the case be re-argued. The Court complied with his wishes and on May 12, ordered a re-argument in the December term of 1856.

By the time the Court met in December the country was fully aroused to the importance which the decision of the Court might have on the future legislation of Congress on the subject of slavery in the Territories.[17] The New York *Courier* declared that it was "the most important [question] that has ever been brought before that tribunal." Not only was the question inherently important, but it would determine whether the Judges could shake off "the passions of the political arena" and decide on "a basis of impartiality and serene independence." That the Court had "vindicated its own high and conservative character" up to December was an acknowledged fact, thought the *Courier*.[18]

Strong influences, however, had been brought to bear upon the Judges. McLean had been a standing candidate for the presidency, and had hoped for the nomination at the hands of the Republicans at Philadelphia. Stephens of Georgia, a warm friend of Montgomery Blair, was quite active and wrote on the day the second argument began:[19]

> I have been urging all the influences I could bring to bear upon the Supreme Court to get them to postpone no longer the case on the Missouri Restriction before them, but to decide it. They take it up today. If they decide as I have reason to believe they will, that the restriction was unconstitutional, that Congress had no power to pass it, then the question—the political question—as I think, will be ended as to the power of the people in their Territorial Legislatures. It will be in effect a re-adjudication.

Blair believed that outside pressure was being brought to bear on the Court to influence its decision against his client.[20] Deter-

[17] Warren, III, 7. [18] Dec. 18, 23, 1856. Quoted by Warren, III, 8.
[19] Dec. 15. Quoted by Warren, III, 8.
[20] Van Buren MSS. M. Blair to M. Van Buren, Feb. 5, 1857.

mined to win the decision against all external influences, he secured the services of George T. Curtis, and thus strengthened, he entered his carriage and drove down the Avenue to deliver his speech which he had reason to believe would probably make or unmake him as a lawyer. He opened the argument in a three-hour speech on December 15, before the Court and a packed room, and later closed the case in a two-hour speech. The strain of his self-consciousness was disconcerting. Opposed to him were able lawyers of renown. Before him sat a court dominated by Southern feeling. Just how much it had been influenced by Southerners he did not know. His party had recently met defeat at the polls, and he as Frémont's lawyer had lost an opportunity to enjoy a high position. Before him sat his father, hoping, smiling, approving. Could he rise to the occasion? Political friends looked on expectantly, and political foes must have looked solemnly on, perhaps superciliously. But allow a Washington correspondent to describe him as a speaker: [21]

> Mr. Blair is a close, logical reasoner, a man of diligent and careful research, strong power of thought, but a very poor pleader. His manner is awkward, his gesticulation particularly painful, and his utterance slow and with the appearance of being obstructed. But his argument would read well.

His argument does read well. He began with a review of the history of the Dred Scott Case, closing that by stating the questions which were before the Court. Did the Supreme Court have jurisdiction? Was Dred a citizen in such sense as to enable him to sue? Did the facts as stated in the agreed case entitle "the plaintiff and his family to freedom, supposing the 8th section of the act of 1820, known as the Missouri Compromise, to be constitutional?" And, finally, was the Missouri Compromise constitutional? [22]

After he had used citations to prove the Court's right to jurisdiction, he turned to the question of citizenship. Therein lay the danger. To argue that he must needs argue the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise, and the right of Congress to restrict slavery in the Territories. The election had concentrated the

[21] *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Dec. 16, 19, 1856; Warren, III, 9.
[22] Blair, *Argument in the Dred Scott Case.*

attention of the country on that issue. Should it now be put before the Court for a decision? The New York *Tribune* pointed out to its readers that such a decision would be a momentous one in the history of the United States.

Following a lengthy discussion of certain cases and decisions relative to citizenship, Blair claimed that [23]

> the argument most relied on by those who deny the citizenship of free colored men is, that the acts of Congress on the subject of naturalization provide for naturalizing white persons only, and thus, it is contended, marked the national sentiment, that none but white persons are citizens.

He cited treaties with the Cherokee and Choctaw Indians, the treaties of 1803 for Louisiana, of 1819 for Florida and of 1847 for California, to prove that Indians and negroes had been made citizens of the United States. At some time during the period before abolitionism was a football of politics, free blacks were recognized as "citizens in all the States," and the natural conclusion is that "the framers of the Constitution and the patriots of that era regarded this class of persons as citizens, and included them in that character in the provisions of the Constitution." The laws of the state of Missouri, he said, permitted free negroes or mulattoes who produced a certificate of citizenship from some one of the United States to reside in that state. The plea of the defendant that Dred was not a citizen because he was a negro was not, therefore, tenable.

Were Dred and his family, or was either of them emancipated by being taken by Dr. Emerson to Illinois, thence to the northern part of the Louisiana Territory and detained there as they are described to have been in the "agreed case"? According to the constitution of Illinois and the Missouri Compromise Act, slaves in Illinois and the Louisiana Territory north of 36° 30′ should be free. The Court of Appeals of Virginia had ruled in the case of Spotts vs. Gillespie that a child born in Pennsylvania after the act of 1780 abolishing slavery, was free, although born of a slave mother, and was free in Virginia as well as in Pennsylvania. Since the second daughter, Lizzie, was born in Missouri, she was free, if her mother was free at the time of her birth.

[23] *Argument of Montgomery Blair, of Counsel for the Plaintiff in Error.*

Judge Wells had ruled that a state could determine whether a slave was slave or free upon his return to the state after an absence in a free state.[24] He had stated, also, that the Supreme Court usually followed the decisions of state courts in respect to state laws. Blair countered with the argument that the United States Court owed no more respect to a decision of a state court than what is due it because of its research, reason and authority which the opinion accompanying the judgment displays. The United States Court owes it to its dignity and to justice to decide a case "according to their own judgment of the law."

Next, did Congress have the power to prohibit slavery in the territories, or did the Constitution carry slavery into them? Blair understood this question to be a volatile one. It is of "more importance, perhaps," he said, "than any which was ever submitted to this court; and the decision of the court is looked for with a degree of interest by the country which seldom attends the proceedings. It is, indeed, the great question of our day and times, and is, substantially, the issue on which the great political divisions among men is founded in all times and countries." He believed that the argument in support of the doctrine of squatter sovereignty was "wholly *ad captandum,*" and rested on a basis unrecognized by the Supreme Court. The policy which should be pursued toward slavery should be governed by the thoughts and aims of the fathers of the Constitution. The Courts had already decided what power our fathers had intended Congress to exercise over territories.[25] It was to suffer territorial legislatures to enact laws with "the sanction of Congress, as the agents of Congress, and dependent wholly on the will of Congress for their force."

His exposition of the power of Congress over acquired lands and territories was clear and comprehensive. He had saved it for the closing argument. His views on slavery naturally found expression during this part of his argument. Men, wherever born, he firmly declared, were divided into two classes. One sympathizes with power and dreads the people, the other dreads tyranny and fears the people less than the first. Those who love

[24] His decision was based on the case of *Strader vs. Graham*—10 Howard, 93-94.
[25] *Ibid.* In *American Insurance Company vs. Canter,* 1 Peters.

power defend institutions which create political privileges. "Slavery is an institution which vests political power in the few, by the monopoly of the soil, wealth, and knowledge which it causes. This is the most obvious effect on the society or States in which it exists, and an obvious consequence is the concentration of power in the hands of those to whom the authority of such societies or States is entrusted in the confederacy of which they form a part."

"And it is the sense of inequality and privilege which it creates, which lies at the bottom of the contest now going on to decide whether new communities of this character shall be created on the unoccupied lands of the confederacy." The character of the government is involved, and to acquiesce in the demands of the slavocracy will subvert it. His closing sentence was filled with references to cases to prove that the power of Congress to prohibit slavery in the territories had long gone unquestioned. One can imagine with what earnestness he pleaded his case, but the tone of the press indicates a lack of enthusiasm in the court room when he closed. When published, his brief required a pamphlet of forty closely printed pages. Though scholarly and able it was too dry to create spontaneous applause. It was solid food for sober thought and consideration when politics were absent.

Senator Geyer took the ground that an African was incapable of being made a citizen. A slave, he argued, was not emancipated by a residence in a free state. He believed precedents could be adduced recognizing the right of Congress to establish municipal governments in territories, but no judicial decision had been made to allow it to go beyond that. As for the Missouri Compromise, the South had accepted it only for the sake of peace, without consideration of it on the ground of constitutionality. Squatter sovereignty was the fair method to be used in the admission of a territory as a state. If Congress had unlimited right to legislate for territories, there was "nothing to prevent their making any man therein a slave." [26]

Reverdy Johnson gave the Court a treat in the form of a "stump speech." One unfriendly hearer wrote that his speech was

[26] Reported in N. Y. *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, December 19.

one of the "finest efforts made at the Bar." His argument was reported in the *Tribune* as distinctly powerful for the defendant. He attempted to maintain that the "constitution of the United States was never designed to consider black men as citizens." It provided throughout, he said, for man to have property in man. The burden of his speech was spent on the Missouri Compromise which he held to be unconstitutional. Like Senator Geyer he used the pro-slavery argument that Congress had no right to prohibit slavery in the territories, no right to legislate friendly to one section, and unfriendly to another, no right to degrade the South with insults. He closed with an eulogium upon the justice and character of the Supreme Court and a tribute to the Union. The Court immediately adjourned for the day (Dec. 17), and admiring hearers showered congratulations on the brilliant speaker-lawyer.

Interest in counsel for the plaintiff, on the part of the North, was centered on the famous and versatile George T. Curtis. His speech was to deal with that part of the argument in which he was most concerned. A special dispatch to the New York *Tribune* (Dec. 19, 1856) says that he concluded his speech in an hour. Blair introduced him to the Court (Dec. 18), to argue the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise. "His argument attracted great attention, and the largest audience assembled during the discussion. It was conceived in an appropriate spirit and urged with power and research, which commanded general admiration." His admiring brother, Justice Benjamin R. Curtis, wrote to a friend that Justice Catron had told him that Curtis had made "the best argument on a question of constitutional law" which he had heard in the Court. A few of the Southern senators congratulated him on his speech.

His frankness in his argument amazed his hearers. Congress, he said, possessed full legislative power to make all needed regulations for the territories. He, however, would use the power to regulate slavery in territories as circumstances dictated—"according to the nature of the soil and climate, the character of the present or the probable character of the future settlers. . . . As a jurist," he continued, "I believe that Congress has full power to

prohibit the introduction of slavery into the Territories of the United States; as a citizen, I can conceive of cases in which it would be unjust to a portion of the Union to exercise that power and in which I would never exercise it." Although Congress had the power to dictate what may be in a state constitution, it should not have done so in the case of Missouri. He went so far as to say he would vote for the admission of a slave state. Explaining that he had entered the case "solely from an impulse of duty," because Blair had failed "to obtain assistance," he then closed his argument with an eulogium on the justice and learning of the Court. The Court adjourned and admirers rushed forward to congratulate the scintillating New England lawyer. Crittenden and some other Southern men had his argument printed in pamphlet form for distribution.[27]

What would the Court decide? The grave effect of it upon political conditions was recognized by discerning men. Montgomery Blair wrote to Van Buren on February 5, 1857, that "it seems to be the impression that the opinion of the Court will be adverse to my client & to the power of Congress over the Territories." He had no criticism to make, other than that prophecies had been made and a barrage of letters had been written to influence the decision against Dred Scott. The decision came as he surmised it would.

The manner of arriving at the decision has been ably described by Professor Hodder.[28] The importance of the case can hardly be exaggerated.

It destroyed Douglas. Upon this question the issue was immediately joined between Lincoln and Douglas. Douglas was forced to fall back upon the doctrine of unfriendly legislation which he had originally promulgated in 1850. This enabled Lincoln to reply: "Judge Douglas says that a thing may be lawfully driven away from a place where it has a lawful right to be." Upon this issue the South deserted Douglas and the Democratic party divided. The Dred Scott decision revived the Republican party. The party was nearly bankrupt for the lack of an issue. The Kansas issue was worn out. People were tired of hearing of "bloody Kansas." Just at the right moment, the

[27] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Dec. 19, 1856; Beveridge, *Lincoln,* II, 463-64; Warren, III, 9-10.

[28] Hodder, *op. cit.*

Dred Scott case provided a new issue and upon this issue Lincoln was nominated for the presidency and elected. The Civil War might not have been averted, but the only chance of averting it lay in the election of Douglas by a united party and the adoption of a new compromise which could have tided over the crisis until a larger degree of intercommunication and a better understanding between the sections had rendered possible a peaceful solution of the problem of slavery.

CHAPTER XXIII

Kansas-Nebraska: Drifting Toward Civil War

Policy may be virtuous as well as vicious.—Proverb.

The Blairs appeared to be quite happy in spite of their defeat which they suffered at the polls with Frémont. Montgomery informed Van Buren in February that "the old gentleman had fattened indeed this fall & winter & the result of the Election in nowise impairs his spirits— He is inclined to think & in that I concur with him that the result of the campaign is in the main good & there is certainly better feeling in Washington at the moment than for years past." As to Buchanan's cabinet "the impression seems to be that he will not concede as much in that matter to our southern friends as they have desired. They are however very diligent." [1] Henry D. Gilpin, who had recently visited Rome, wrote to Van Buren that Blair of Silver Spring reminded him of the story of Cato and his farm. He looked younger by fifteen years and "time and *agriculture* have mellowed his asperities, so that he almost made me think a man *might not* be the worse in his old age from going back into the bustle of politics." Winsome "Betty," then known to her friends as the "Little Democrat," later told her son, Blair Lee, that her father and brothers were greatly disappointed in Frémont. They had believed him to be more capable than he was, and that he had written his own story of his adventures in the West. Their faith in his ability, however, was not fundamentally shaken until after the Civil War was running its course.

Other Republicans were not so sanguine as the Blairs. The future of the party looked dark. The Democratic press was jubilant over the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case. At last it appeared that Slavocracy would triumph. Simon Cameron, now grown old and gray-haired, lamented the loss of

[1] Van Buren MSS. Feb. 5, 1857.

the election. He expressed a fear that he might never see victory for the Republicans. Blair tried to cheer him by promising victory in 1860, but Cameron knew that many a sincere, anti-slavery Northerner would be in his grave before 1860. He little dreamed in 1856 that he would be President Lincoln's first Secretary of War. Eastern "political friends" of Frémont deserted him as soon as they could see no prospective jobs in his face. Mrs. Frémont complained to Montgomery Blair of the coolness with which she and her Western friends were received in New York City. Her disagreement with the Bigelows cut her to the quick.[2] From over the country came news that appeared to presage dissolution of the party. It is quite probable that such would have been the fate of the young party had it not been for the storm of opposition to the Dred Scott decision which developed in the North. That brought solidarity. It made the North as sectional in its attempt to protect its beliefs and rights as the South was in its determination to spread slavery.

The imperious Benton, with a foot in the grave and still a Democrat, went on his final rampage. In the House of Representatives he headed the Democratic opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and against it made his greatest speech in that body. He tried to defeat an appropriation bill for ten million dollars which was to complete the Gadsden Purchase, declaring as he did so that it was merely another scheme of Slavocracy to extend its system.[3] During the recent presidential campaign he "thought Mr. Buchanan the best chance for the safety of the Union, and supported him accordingly"; now he was of the opinion that "the Union cannot stand the present state of things. I know disunion is intended," he declared, "and has been since 1830. . . . If Mr. Buchanan continues the policy of the present administration the Union will approach its last days, and to save it in 1860 will require all its friends, forgetting everything else, to stand together. The presidential convention is to be held in Charleston, S. C. and a disunionist, as a tool is intended to be nominated."[4]

Benton pranced over the country to plead for the Union. But

[2] Blair MSS. Jessie Frémont to M. Blair, Jan. 8, 1858.
[3] Meigs, *op. cit.*, 429-32.
[4] Van Buren MSS. Benton to M. Van Buren, Feb. 17, 1857.

his sun had set. Peculiarly enough he turned on Frank Blair and Gratz Brown, who had turned the Missouri *Democrat* into an anti-slavery paper. Benton wrote to a wealthy St. Louisan that he wished him to secure control of the *Democrat,* "change its name and character—for no useful paper can now ever be made of it. . . . The paper is given up to the slavery subject, agitating state emancipation against my established and known policy." [5]

He was so angry with Blair and Brown that he burst forth thus: "For persons calling themselves my friends to attack the whole policy of my life, which was to keep slavery agitation out of the State, and get my support in the canvass by keeping me ignorant of what they intended to do, is the greatest outrage I have ever experienced." As a matter of fact, he had helped to raise the Kansas issue and Frank Blair had endeavored to keep him out of the canvass. The "Old Roman" was now smarting under the lash of defeat; he was in no state of mind and body to thank Blair for his consistent support of him in all his recent campaigns. He had prophesied that disunion was ahead, yet he could not adjust himself to the trend of events. Benton's protest availed him nothing. The *Democrat* continued to publish editorials of an anti-slavery nature, at the same time protesting against the charges of being committed to abolition. The editors denied the charges of being abolitionists better to enable them to win the support of the free-soil Democrats. It was wise to play the rôle of Democrat, and it was very fortunate for Missouri and the Union that Blair was willing to act his part. He went to Congress nominally a Democrat, but actually a Republican while his friends in St. Louis worked for his reëlection in 1858. He was too much of a bitter pill for Slavocracy to swallow.[6]

Blair and Lincoln conferred at Springfield, Illinois, in April, 1857. They were powerful in their respective states, and the meeting was therefore significant. Their views on slavery were quite similar; Lincoln was not an abolitionist, but he did not want slavery extended. An authorized biographical sketch of Blair appeared in Missouri setting forth his views thus: [7]

[5] Walter B. Stevens, "Lincoln and Missouri," in the *Missouri Historical Review,* X, No. 2, Jan. 1916.

[6] N. Y. *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Aug. 18, 1857.

[7] Stevens, *op. cit.*

He is no believer in the unholy and disgusting tenets advocated by abolition fanaticism but advocates the gradual abolition of slavery in the Union and the colonization of the slaves emancipated in Central America, which climate appears to be happily adapted to their constitutional idiosyncracies.

When Blair left St. Louis for Congress he went pledged to gradual abolition of slavery. He was determined to strengthen the Republican party in his own state, and he was an uncompromising opponent of the Buchanan administration. His father busied himself better to organize the Republican party. He spent much of his time talking to party organizers. Once again he appealed to Seward as one of the strongest men in it. He begged: [8]

Pray democratize our party as far as you can. I mean in the genuine original sense of the word. Those who use the word to cover counterfeits have left the whole region of pure popular principle to the Republicans. They, the pseudo-Democrats, are the creatures of the slave oligarchy. They carry the elections by force and fraud, by the bayonets of a standing army [in Kansas]. . . . They call in the judiciary to overthrow the laws and constitution [as in the Dred Scott case], and intrench their crimes behind the Bench. . . . Bring your Whigs to overturn this perversion of our institutions, made through the vile and sordid intrigues of Southern politicians with northern "doughfaces," and you will establish a Republican party, North and South on solid ground, that no earthquake can shake.

"Young Hickory," as Benton had called Frank, became very active immediately upon his taking his seat in Congress. Among his colleagues were 128 Democrats, 92 Republicans, and 14 Native Americans or Know-nothings. Stephen C. Foster was there to represent Maine; Justin S. Morrill, who was to become the father of the Morrill Act, came from Vermont; Massachusetts had sent the nationally known Nathaniel P. Banks and Eli Thayer; Pennsylvania had sent Galusha A. Grow, later the self-called father of the Homestead Act; Georgia's delegation claimed Alexander H. Stephens, future Vice-President of the Confederacy; L. Q. C. Lamar and John A. Quitman came from Mississippi; Ohio had her Geo. H. Pendleton, John Sherman, and Joshua R. Giddings there to represent her; Humphrey Marshall came up

[8] Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 325.

from Kentucky, Elihu B. Washburn and Owen Lovejoy from Illinois, and Schuyler Colfax from Indiana.[9] The Thirty-fifth was an able House of Representatives composed of new and experienced men.

The Republicans were determined to consolidate their party and make it a powerful one in the next election. Their success since early in 1854 had been phenomenal. What could they do now with 92 of them in the House and 20 in the Senate to challenge every move made by the Democrats? In the Senate they had Hannibal Hamlin, Henry Wilson, Charles Sumner, John P. Hale, Simon Cameron, William H. Seward, Benjamin F. Wade, Lyman Trumbull, Zachariah Chandler, and James R. Doolittle, to harass the Democrats. On the other side, however, sat able, experienced, determined men, some of whom were deliberate in their actions and others were "fire-eaters." Among them were Stephen A. Douglas, James A. Bayard, R. M. T. Hunter, James M. Mason, Robert Toombs, Jefferson Davis, John Bell, Andrew Johnson, and Sam Houston. James S. Green and Trusten Polk of Missouri were there. Blair and Benton had measured political strength with them, and with them Blair was destined to measure swords in civil war.

Blair answered the first roll call when the House opened for business, December 7, 1857. James L. Orr, Democrat of South Carolina, was elected Speaker over Galusha A. Grow, by a vote of 128 to 84. Of the thirty-eight committees announced by the Speaker, Blair was appointed to the unimportant one on private land claims. The Democrats did not propose to honor a "Black Republican" who had been elected on the Democratic ticket in Missouri.

The first business transacted by the House was, to them, very important—they decided after some protests from the clerks to move to the new hall in the south wing of the Capitol. Morrill then introduced a bill to donate public lands to states and territories to provide for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts. He asked that the bill be referred to the Committee of Agriculture of which he was a member, but Letcher, Democrat from Vir-

[9] *Cong. Globe,* Part I, 1st Sess. 35th Cong. 1857-58, 1-2.

ginia, protested that it should go to the Committee on Public Lands, and won by a party vote of 105 to 89. Morrill and the Republicans lost their first battle. The fight between the ins and the outs was on. Throughout the entire session the battle raged. In the House Grow introduced his homestead bill. Railroads came in for consideration. Douglas hardly gave the Senate time to organize before he announced his intention to introduce a bill to enable the Kansans to hold a convention to frame a constitution and to seek admission as a state. Kansas soon took the center of the stage and kindled the smoldering fires of party hatreds. In it the Republicans had an effective issue until the country could be aroused over the Dred Scott decision.

On January 4, 1858, Blair introduced his first bill. Its purpose was to authorize the contractors for carrying the overland mail to California to adopt any route they might select.[10] A few days later he introduced a resolution which requested information as to the probability of the construction of a railroad through South Pass. He thus stepped into Benton's shoes. He had good reasons for his interest in the West. Missouri was fast becoming the mother of western states. She had long known the value of the Santa Fé trade and trail and the Oregon Trail. Her silver specie and mules were products derived from the Southwest. Missourians had been prominent in the Mexican War. Their state had stood at the apex of the wedge of civilization moving westward. Now she purposed to be the starting point for overland mail routes and railroads which might cross the plains and the Rockies to the Pacific Coast.

But the thing which lay nearest Blair's heart was the problem of gradual abolition of slavery. His opportunity to express his views on the subject came when the message of the President to Congress was received and discussed. It was a lengthy exposition on currency, foreign affairs, Kansas, and the Mormons—subjects of a controversial nature. Buchanan assumed that the Dred Scott decision would settle for all time the right of any citizen to take his property into any territory of the United States. He would have admitted Kansas as a state at once to preserve the

[10] *Ibid.*, 183.

peace of the country.[11] Blair held widely different views and on January 14, he introduced a resolution asking for a committee to be appointed by the Speaker, to [12]

> inquire into the expediency of providing for the acquisition of territory either in the Central or South American States, to be colonized with colored persons from the United States who are now free, and who may hereafter become free, and who may be willing to settle in such territory as a dependency of the United States, with ample guarantees of their personal and political rights.

This resolution was thrown into the midst of a heated discussion of our neutral rights and our relations with South and Central American countries, with especial attention to Nicaragua. After a grand appeal from Alexander Stephens in behalf of American rights in Nicaragua, Blair delivered his maiden speech on the floor of the House. He was no novice at speechmaking. In fact, he was already a veteran campaigner at the age of thirty-seven years. His speech, sanctioned by his father and brother, was characteristically documented and showed that he had spent considerable time in its preparation. It was characteristic of him to strike out boldly and go to the heart of his subject, ofttimes sacrificing a bit of valuable diplomatic politics. That was what he did in the 35th Congress. His speech on slavery ran in part as follows: [13]

> There is a party in this country who go for the extension of slavery; and these predatory incursions against our neighbors are the means by which territory is to be seized, planted with slavery, annexed to this Union, and, in combination with the present slaveholding States, made to dominate this Government, and the entire continent; or, failing in the policy of annexation, to unite with the slave States in a southern slaveholding Republic. . . . I think we ought to put it out of the power of any body of men to plant slavery anywhere on this continent, by taking immediate steps to give to all of these countries that require it, and especially to the Central American States, the power to sustain free insitutions under stable governments; and, as one method of doing this, we might plant those countries with a class of men who are worse than useless to us, who would prove themselves to be of immense advantage to those countries, who would attract the wealth and energy of our best men to aid and direct them in developing the in-

[11] Richardson, IV, 2967-94.
[12] *Cong. Globe,* 1st Sess. 35th Cong., 293.
[13] *Ibid.,* Part I, 293-98.

credible riches of those regions, and thus open them to our commerce, and the commerce of the whole world. I refer to our enfranchised slaves. . . .

He concurred in Randolph's opinion that slavery was a cancer on the face of the Republic that would eat out its vitals, and that the masters must run from their slaves, if their slaves did not run first. Long ago the intelligent and able young whites of the South had begun to flee northward and westward where industries and cheap lands abounded. The slave oligarchy of the South had refused to heed the signs of approaching emancipation. The President was sympathetic with them. Oh, for a President who could look beyond a nominating convention! The day must come, he said, when "enslaved Presidents" and "Buchaneers" shall pass away.

He proposed to solve the problem of manumitting slaves by deporting them under the protection and guidance of the government of the United States. Honduras in Central America was a likely spot for a negro state. According to the English scientist and traveler, Mr. Wells, Honduras was a decadent state wherein an effete Spanish civilization was unable to survive the ill effects of too much Indian and mestizo blood. Suitable diplomatic arrangements could be made under the strong arm of our navy whereby our freedmen could be sent there. They would without a doubt be superior to the *insurrectios* and be instrumental in spreading American free institutions as British colonists had done for Britain. Colonization of our negroes would be a sensible substitute for the proposal of the Democrats to support Walker, for the Atchison-Kansas conspiracy, and for "the triumph of 'military rule' over civil institutions." Both North and South might advantageously support such a plan for emancipation. We should remember that "the propagation of slavery can only be successfully resisted by the propagation of freedom." Economic freedom and the blessings of progress and liberty can come only through a united attempt to abolish slavery.

A speech like that coming from a life-long Democrat from a slave State was like wormwood to the pro-slavery Congressmen. They immediately classed the author as a traitor to his party. The Republicans were not convinced that he was a true Republi-

can. In fact he voted with the Democrats for the Clayton-Bulwer treaty and on minor issues. His dislike for New England Yankees caused him to remark unnecessarily in a light vein in Congress that "there is no place in their consciences where you can get a snag-boat in." [14] As a consequence he was much a man without a party during the first session of the 35th Congress.

The Southern Democracy was in no mood to talk favorably about emancipation. It would rather have allowed that subject an interminable rest. Blair, however, had no notion of granting it that privilege. While Congress was wrangling over the admission of Kansas and Minnesota to statehood, he introduced his second resolution intended to check slavery. He proposed in it "to prohibit the importation or immigration of free persons from Africa under indentures or apprenticeship." [15] Pro-slavery men instantly objected to it and nothing came of it except more bitterness against its author.

Blair's main object was to embarrass the administration and especially "Old Buck" as much as he could. He, like Lincoln, believed that Republican success in 1860 was worth a price, and to attain that success he worked with might and main. He correctly believed that his project for the emancipation and colonization of negroes would never be given a hearing by the Democratic party as long as the South controlled it. The possible success of his principle depended upon the election of a Republican administration.

The President, in his message, referred to the Dred Scott decision as final on the subject of slavery. He was probably honest in that assertion. A successful administration loomed ahead, if he could peaceably settle the Kansas question. The financial crisis of 1857 had not then occurred; the country was willing to agree to a reasonable settlement of the Kansas trouble, and the Republicans were on the verge of dissolution for want of an arousing issue. The President sought one of the ablest politicians in his party for governor of the distracted Territory of Kansas. He begged R. J. Walker, formerly of Pennsylvania and now of Mississippi, to undertake the task. Walker thrice refused. The President finally personally persuaded Mrs. Walker to consent to

[14] *Ibid.*, Part 3, 2864.

[15] *Ibid.*, Part 2, 1146.

have her husband go to Kansas. Once in the Territory, Walker discovered that it was destined to be free. The only honorable thing left for him to do was to deal exact justice to contending anti- and pro-slavery factions, and at the same time unite the Democrats in support of the administration. If Kansas was to be admitted, let it be a Democratic state.[16]

But such a policy was easier planned than carried out. The abolitionists agreed to allow the illegal convention at Lecompton, Kansas, to frame a constitution as a step toward statehood. The convention was dominated by ultra pro-slavery men, guarded by troops, and it wrote an impossible constitution for a liberty-loving people. Under it slavery would have been guaranteed whether or no. The free-soilers were outraged at the "shallow and wicked performance, worthy perhaps of a border-ruffian convention." A clique at Washington, under the eyes of the timid, feeble, and helpless old President, urged the adoption of the constitution. Walker refused to support it. A diabolical plot, unknown to Buchanan, was hatched by the pro-slavery men high in the Government to offer Walker the presidency in 1860 for his support of the Lecompton Constitution. Upon his flat refusal, the Southern junto made the threat to Buchanan that the South would secede from the Union if he did not abandon Walker to his fate. Meanwhile the country floundered in the throes of the panic of 1857, but the fall elections went in favor of the Democrats before the plot was "sprung upon the people." [17]

The plot of the junto acted as a firebrand thrown into a powder magazine. Northern Democrats and Republicans alike denounced it. Douglas, who believed that he could not be reëlected to the Senate in the coming elections, conferred with his friends, and then announced his decision to oppose the Lecompton Constitution and the plot to force slavery upon Kansas. He called on Buchanan when he arrived in Washington to attend Congress. They failed to reach an agreement, and when Buchanan declared that he would recommend the adoption of the Lecompton Constitution, Douglas announced that he would oppose it in the Senate. The President excitedly rose and said: "Mr. Douglas, I desire you to remember that no Democrat ever

[16] Rhodes, *op. cit.*, II, ch. 9. [17] *Ibid.*

yet differed from an administration of his own choice without being crushed." Douglas emphatically replied: "Mr. President, I wish you to remember that General Jackson is dead." [18]

The President had decided to throw himself into the arms of the South. He was "perplexed, harassed, and wearied" and accused Douglas of having got the country into trouble with the Kansas-Nebraska bill and for not facing the issue through to its final conclusion. He later sent his message to Congress (Feb. 2, 1858) recommending the admission of Kansas with the Lecompton Constitution which, he said, had been "legally constituted." Thus Pierce, who had served the Democracy of the South well, was to be outdone by Buchanan. Douglas was true to his word. On December 9, 1857, he denounced the Lecompton Constitution as Napoleonic. "His language was courteous, but his manner was bold, haughty, and defiant." Anti-slavery men and presses commended his speech. His action in this matter was consistent and honorable, accusations to the contrary notwithstanding. But he won the ill will of the administration. "Southerners denounced him without stint, the hot-headed menacing him with personal violence." Newspaper letter-writers said he had turned "Black Republican," and supporters of the President railed at him in the Senate. The President took the right of patronage from Douglas, but he unflinchingly summed up the Lecompton Constitution as "a trick, a fraud upon the rights of the people." [19] Greeley came out with the proposal that the Republicans of Illinois adopt Douglas for their standard-bearer in 1858. This, however, was stoutly opposed by Lincoln, Trumbull, and the party in general. Douglas was too tricky to please Lincoln.

Walker, after a futile interview with the President, resigned as governor of Kansas. The effects were far-reaching as is evidenced in the action of the Northwestern Democracy which veered to Douglas and irretrievably split the party. Blair exultantly wrote on December 16, 1857, to a friend: [20]

> We have got the National Demagogues split irretrievably on the Lecompton constitution, and now we shall go on conquering and to conquer. You must begin at once to look after Missouri at the next August election.

[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] S. B. Harding, *Life of George R. Smith* (Sedalia, 1904), 266.

His Missouri friends began at once to prepare for the August election in 1858. They proposed to retire his colleagues from Missouri—Woodson and Anderson who had voted "steadily with the Demagogues." "I have tried my best," wrote Blair to General George R. Smith of Sedalia, who had written to Blair on the subject, "to prevent their making d—— fools of themselves, but I can do nothing with them. They may go to the devil their own road, because we have the deadwood on them in this House of Representatives, and I think the Administration will not be able to carry another measure this Congress." [21]

The Republicans, according to Blair, had found a real political issue in the controversy over Kansas. "We are trying to force them into a vote on the essence of the Lecompton swindle and the President's message to a select committee. They are interposing motions to adjourn, calls of the House, etc., but we beat them on every motion, and intend to hold their noses to the grindstone until we grind them off. The d—ned rascals feel lost; they know that when we do reach a vote, we shall beat them. . . . You must try your d—nedest to harmonize matters in the State. . . . We must carry Missouri next August." [22] A month later to a day he wrote to Smith that "all eyes are turned upon Missouri, and if we can defeat the Nullifiers next August, we shall be circled with a halo of glory."

The debate on the supreme issue continued to wax warmer. Men on either side were strained in their attempts to be decently courteous to those on the other side. Many arguments were advanced pro and con on the fated Lecompton Constitution. Farnsworth of Illinois opposed the admission of Kansas as a state with that constitution because it was "an attempt by the administration to consummate a conspiracy begun nearly four years ago, to make a slave State." [23] Giddings of Ohio accused the South of demanding the admission of Kansas as a slave state to empower her to "elect a President of the United States"; he believed with Bingham of Ohio that man, whoever he might be, was the handiwork of God and "destined to immortality," and that there could be no property right in a negro.[24]

[21] *Ibid.*, 267-69.
[22] *Ibid.*, Blair to Gen. Geo. R. Smith, Feb. 6, 1858.
[23] *Cong. Globe*, 1st Sess. 35th Cong., Part II, 1206.
[24] *Ibid.*, 1208-13.

Each Congressman felt called to expatiate at more or less length on the subject. More than one embarrassed novitiate apologetically made his first "effort to address" the House, while old and young wore the subject threadbare. Burnett of Kentucky finally complained that there was no new argument to be produced in behalf of the admission of Kansas. He thought a territory had a right to determine its own constitution; that the Kansas-Nebraska Act should have wiped out all ill-feeling engendered by the Missouri Compromise; that it was positively absurd to maintain that the passage of the Act was the cause of all "the riot, treason, bloodshed, revolution, murder, and every other crime," which marked the history of Kansas since that time. In his estimation it was criminal to extol the work of the Emigrant Aid Society which, led by Eli Thayer and Amos Lawrence, had encouraged free-soilers to migrate to Kansas, and on the other hand criticize the infallible Supreme Court for its decision in the Dred Scott case, as had Crittenden in the Senate.[25] Like other Democratic Congressmen, he fully endorsed the President's speech to Congress on February 2, 1858, in which he said:

> It has been solemnly adjudged, by the highest judicial tribunal known to our laws, that slavery exists in Kansas by virtue of the Constitution of the United States. Kansas is, therefore, at this moment, as much a slave State as Georgia or South Carolina. Without this, the equality of the sovereign States composing the Union would be violated, and the use and enjoyment of a Territory acquired by the common treasure of all the States, would be closed against the people and the property of nearly half the members of the Confederacy.

Such doctrine was too much for the blood of a Blair, and as soon as the fiery Burnett closed his speech, Frank Blair rose from his seat to deliver his second philippic against slavery. Speaking deliberately at first, he proposed to talk "frankly and candidly" on the position of the "Administration and the Democratic party" on this question. He had no apology for what he was about to say, which meant that he would take the bark off. Slavery had, he said, made the last three "presidents 'fetch and carry' at its beck and nod." It had controlled the national legislature for years, and now it swayed the decisions of the Supreme Court.

[25] *Ibid.*, 1278.

The pledges of Buchanan, who was within the clutches of Slavocracy, were made to be broken. "I always believed that Mr. Buchanan was nominated to carry out the policy of his predecessor, which was to fix slavery upon Kansas by force or fraud; and, in my opinion, not only Kansas, but the whole continent is embraced in this conspiracy." The scheme, he said, was hateful to the people.

He was warming up to his subject when he declared that the whole argument of the Supreme Court and of Buchanan in his inaugural address assigning the reason why Congress and the people of a territory cannot prohibit slavery is grounded on the fact that "it is unjust to exclude the property of the people of any one portion of the Confederacy from that which was acquired by the people of the whole Confederacy." If that be conceded it follows that the people of a state cannot prohibit slavery. J. Glancy Jones attempted to interfere or heckle at this point in Blair's speech, but he was quickly silenced. He strode on. Look at Buchanan's special message! Did he not call Kansas a *slave state,* and say that "it was made a slave State by the Federal Constitution, and not by the people?" Such doctrine may be found in the Dred Scott decision! According to that doctrine how and where could the voice of the people be heard? "I do not care," he said, "how many judicial decisions shall sanction it, or how many regiments may be called out to enforce it; in my opinion, the attempt will fail. The Territories of this Government cannot be wrested from the freemen to whom they belong, to be given up to slaveholders and their slaves, in order to strengthen the oligarchy which rests upon this servile institution."

The Lecompton Constitution, he declared, could have been framed only under the protection of Federal bayonets. It was the work of an oligarchy that would substitute slave labor for free labor. He compared it with the evil days of the Roman Republic when the poverty-stricken people who had been robbed by the greedy nobility called upon Tiberius Gracchus to restore their lands to them. And since then not a writer for the privileged classes had commended the just laws of Tiberius Gracchus. Slavocracy, greedy and aggressive, now hoped to dispossess freemen and avariciously appropriate the rich territorial farm lands

belonging to the nation. In Roman times patricians fought the Tribune, but in our time "rotten" Democracy fought Free-Soilers.

His vein of ridicule and sarcasm had precluded him a hearing in the South by the time he reached his appealing argument against the slavery system. He quoted Clay of Alabama who said of his own state, "one will discover numerous farm houses, once the abode of industrious and intelligent freemen, now occupied by slaves or tenantless, deserted, and dilapidated; he will observe fields, once fertile, now unfenced, abandoned, and covered with those evil harbingers, foxtail and broomsedge"; he quoted William Gregg of South Carolina who said it was evident that slave labor was commanded by the intelligent whites and that as a consequence a large portion of the poor white people were in a neglected condition little above the Indian; he quoted Congressman Faulkner of Virginia who said in 1832 that slavery is "an institution that presses heavily against the best interests of the State. It banishes free white labor; it exterminates the mechanic, the artisan, the manufacturer . . ." and he denounced Governor Hammond of South Carolina who called Europeans coming to America "semi-barbarian emigrants" . . . those hordes that were thundering at our doors crying for one hundred and sixty acres of land. He asked what would Jackson have done with men like Hammond? And he answered, "Why, sir, there would have been somebody else read out of that party . . . rather different from those who are now being read out. If this is Democratic doctrine [Hammond's], it is a novel doctrine to me, though I have been reared a Democrat. I make no complaint, however, of having been read out of the party. I should as soon think of complaining of being read out of a chain-gang (Laughter)."

He eloquently asserted in his peroration that democracy rested more in personal liberty than in property rights, that noble souls still lived in the South who would lead in the emancipation of the negro slave, and that Missouri would not be insensible to her glorious destiny which awaited her, nor fail to live up to the legend which she bears upon her shield, *"salus populi suprema lex esto."* [26]

The Democrats were hopelessly split over the issue. Threats

[26] *Ibid.*, 1282-84. Speech in House, Mar. 23, 1858.

from the President failed to hold many of the Northern men in line. Among them was Horace F. Clark, a life-long Democrat, of New York, who in a speech one hour in length, quietly informed his colleagues that he believed it to be his duty to support the Kansas-Nebraska Act as a party measure, but that he could not become a party to the innovation of the new principle that Congress may enforce the claims of a section of the Union upon a territory of the United States. He believed it was the sentiment of the Northern Democracy to allow slavery to exist unmolested only where it was. At the close of his speech another squabble ensued over who should speak next. Finally David Kilgore obtained the floor. He wondered what his quiet, law-abiding Quaker constituency would think if it could observe the excited debates! Then he stirred up a hornet's nest by introducing a copy of some resolutions signed by James Buchanan in 1819 imploring the National Legislature "to prevent the existence of slavery in any of the new Territories and States which may be created by States." The friends of the President were evidently embarrassed and angered at the turn of events. While attempting to deny the truth of Buchanan's signature to the resolutions, they were forced to admit that he had supported the Missouri Compromise. Kilgore then shut off their interference and took up the subject of Blair's speech where the latter left off. The speaker claimed that he was a peace-loving, old line Whig from Indiana, but before he closed it was strikingly evident that a rank abolitionist could hardly have made a stronger speech against slavery.[27]

During the First Session member after member spoke more or less at length on the admission of Kansas to statehood. After a few days of discussion, each one acknowledged at the opening of his address that he had nothing new to say, but he proceeded to argue or harangue the House while it sat in the committee of the whole and considered the "state of the Union." Approximately sixty-six Congressmen made remarks on the subject ranging in length of time from one minute to an hour, and sometimes longer. Sixty-five Senators and Congressmen had their lengthy speeches printed in the *Appendix* to the *Congressional Globe.*

[27] *Ibid.*, 1310-15.

Other controversial subjects were debated when the admission of Kansas, or matters of a private nature, were not before Congress. Among them was the problem of the construction of a railroad to the Pacific. Neither side would agree with the other on the location of a western railroad which was proposed to be built from somewhere on the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. The South demanded that the railroad be constructed by the southernmost route, while Blair and other interested parties argued as cogently for the central or northern routes. Had Blair been successful in securing the passage of a bill for the construction of a road along the central route he would have returned to Missouri hailed as a hero and a great statesman of the West. But that accomplishment was impossible under the existing circumstances. The Southern members of Congress had no intentions of aiding the North to strengthen her economic superiority. They, consequently, under the stress of partisan agitations effectually prevented the construction of a railroad along the central or northern routes until they had withdrawn from Congress to test the strength of the Union.

These major issues were soon clouded by the approaching elections of 1858. The English bill, a compromise measure, was finally forced through Congress to provide for the re-submission of the Lecompton Constitution to the people of Kansas Territory with the chance to accept or reject it. If the voters rejected it, Kansas was to lose a part of the public land to which she was entitled, and to remain a territory until her population equaled the ratio required for a representative in Congress. At the August election in 1858, the Kansans defeated the Lecompton Constitution by a majority of 9,886 votes. The Republicans, after giving wide publicity inside and out of Congress to the knavery of the Missourians in Kansas, went to the polls praying for substantial majorities. Peace was farther away than partisan participants dreamed it could be.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Election of 1858: Drifting toward Civil War

Here is a colossal aggregation of wealth invested in negroes, which undertakes to seize this Government to pervert it to its own purpose, and to prevent the freemen of the country from entering the Territories except in competition with slave labor; and the Democratic party, instead of standing where it used to stand, in opposition to these Anti-Democratic measures, is as servile a tool of the oligarchy as are the negro slaves themselves.

—F. P. Blair, Jr.

1

The elections of 1858 were preludes to that of 1860 in more than one way. Reason was fast being replaced by passion, vilification and hatred. Two of these Congressional elections were of primary importance to the Blairs. In Illinois Lincoln and Douglas staged a series of joint debates which attracted the notice of the nation and clearly set forth views on the colonization of free negroes at state expense and orientated themselves in the ranks of the Republican party. They, furthermore, unfortunately became involved in a bitter quarrel with William Carey Jones, son-in-law of the deceased Benton, an altercation that gained neither disputant anything.

2

Frank Blair met Lincoln in the office of the latter when he went to Washington to enter Congress in 1857. These two astute politicians agreed to make the border regions the center of their fight against the further extension of slavery. They expected to see two eventful years ahead while they prepared for the battle in 1860. William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner in Springfield, wrote to Theodore Parker the next day after the conference that the two conferees said, "We are to see the devil in these

border States in 1860." [1] They agreed that slavery must not be extended, that immediate emancipation was impracticable, if not impossible, and they expected the nation finally to become all slave or all free. Neither of them was at heart an abolitionist. Both of them loved the Union above all else, and ardently desired a peaceful solution of the slavery issue, but they were willing to draw the sword to save their country.

Missouri and Illinois were then to become the first battle grounds. Blair's part in Congress in the struggle over the admission of Kansas to statehood has been described. His friend, Peter L. Foy of St. Louis, wrote a series of articles in 1861 for the Missouri *Democrat* on the unfairness of enforced competition of white labor with black labor. These articles were elaborations of Blair's economic argument against slavery which he used in his speeches in Congress and elsewhere. The gradual emancipationists elected their candidates for Mayor of St. Louis in 1857 and in 1858. Both of these men were intimate friends of Blair. Gratz Brown went to the Missouri legislature while Blair was in Congress and provoked high indignation among pro-slavery men with his emancipation speech. He made his speech in opposition to a joint resolution passed by the legislature. The resolution declared that emancipation of slaves in Missouri would be impracticable and that any movement having such an object in view would be "inexpedient, impolitic, and unjust." Brown replied that: [2]

> It will be here, as elsewhere, a conflict of race; and I do say that the increase of free white population, together with the white emigration from other States coming to Missouri will, whenever and wherever the labor of the white man meets the labor of the slave, beside the same plowshare, in the same harvest field, face to face, not only be entitled to demand, but will receive, the preference; and that the labor of the white man will force the labor of the slave to give place and take itself off.
>
> Missouri must, ere long, from the operation of natural causes, rid herself of the institution. In all our domestic relations, as well as in our relations as a State of this confederacy, Missouri would be benefitted by the liberation and riddance of every slave within her borders.
>
> Missouri has nothing in common with the South, either in national

[1] Stevens, *op. cit.*
[2] Missouri *Democrat,* quoted by Harding, in *George R. Smith,* 307-308.

or home concerns. Nor does she owe any debt of gratitude to that section.

The gradual emancipationists in Missouri were led by uncompromising, determined men. They realized that the time had come when they could unmask their political views to their constituents. The situation in Missouri was promising. There was about one slave to ten whites and the slave population was largely in contiguous counties along the Missouri River. St. Louis had her large population of freedom-loving Germans, and other poor white laborers to whom Foy's articles made a strong appeal. The sentiment of the obdurate opponents to the extension of slavery is well expressed in a letter of James S. Rollins to James O. Broadhead of St. Louis which reads as follows:[3]

> Compromise Hell! Do you suppose there is any compromise in me? I was not born on a day of Compromise! . . .
>
> Whether Kansas comes in under the Lecompton swindle or is defeated the tale will be told in 1860. In the language of Seward, the victory is already won, and at that time in one common batch—the traitors—the nullifiers—the secessionists will go to the wall together—and if I live until that day, I declare now for an indiscriminate slaughter—sparing only the women & children!

Blair told Lincoln that the Missouri *Democrat* would "open and bloom for Republicanism in 1860." In 1857 he was not prepared to have the *Democrat* announce openly for Republicanism. They agreed to influence as many other newspapers in the border states to follow the example of the *Democrat* as they could. Young John Hay who was reading law in Lincoln's office began at once as correspondent for the *Democrat.* It was believed that Lincoln inspired some of his articles to that paper. Hay attended the Lincoln-Douglas debates and reported them in graphic accounts to the *Democrat.* At the same time a country editor by the name of John Nicolay, a political lieutenant of Lincoln's, followed the debaters and took subscriptions for the *Democrat.*[4]

The Lincoln-Douglas campaign was the most spectacular and best known of the contests which took place in 1858. Douglas

[3] James O. Broadhead *Collection,* in the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Mar. 2, 1858.

[4] Stevens, *op. cit.*

sought his reëlection to the Senate on his past record. He was the author of the Kansas-Nebraska bill and an opponent of the Lecompton Constitution. With the aid of Republican votes in Congress he had forced the administration to return the Lecompton Constitution to the people in Kansas where they might reject or accept it. That was his idea of popular sovereignty.

The violent breach between Douglas and Buchanan over the Lecompton Constitution caused some of the Republicans outside Illinois to urge the Republicans in the state to amalgamate their party with that of Douglas and his political friends. The President dismissed friends of Douglas from office throughout Illinois and the pro-slavery men soundly berated him in and out of Congress. His friends labored hard to produce harmony between him and the Buchanan wing in order to prevent disastrous results in the elections of 1858 and 1860. Their efforts were fruitless because Douglas and Buchanan stubbornly refused to recede from their positions on slavery. By February 28, 1858, Douglas was impressed with the determination of the administration to defeat him in Illinois. He believed that it was at that time attempting to form an alliance with the Republicans of Illinois to effect his political destruction. "The contest," he wrote to Judge Treat, "is a painful one to me, but I have no alternative, but to accept the issue and stand by what I deem to be my duty." [5]

Did Douglas consider for once the proposition of becoming a Republican? It was charged against him that he did; and connected with the charge is his next to inexplainable political relations with Frank Blair. It has been noted that Blair was an enemy to Buchanan and all his kind. On March 2, just after Douglas had written to Judge Treat, one Isaac Sturgeon, an assistant Treasurer of the United States at St. Louis, and a firm supporter of Buchanan, wrote to the latter calling his attention to a "most villainously abusive article" published in Blair and Brown's *Democrat* of that morning. He wanted the *Union* at Washington to denounce Frank Blair whom he suspected as the author, and the President, he insinuated, should get rid of Montgomery Blair who was Solicitor of the Court of Claims. The article to which he referred was an answer to an adulatory editorial in the

[5] Treat MSS. Feb. 28, 1858.

Indiana *Sentinel*.[6] The style and content of the article indicate that no other than Frank Blair wrote it. He said Buchanan had been "a petty cabinet intriguer" during the Mexican War. "Of the great and leading measures of the Democratic party it cannot be said that he was ever a consistent and reliable advocate of any one. . . . He has systematically deserted each and all, proved faithful to no party platform and is now seen disgracing himself, his adherents, his country, and his professions by violating the sacred rights of the people of the territories to curry favor with the old and malignant enemies of Jackson . . . the nullifiers . . . Buchanan is, and ever has been, a miserable trimmer."

This vituperative article was published about the time that Blair was read out of the Democracy by Smith of Virginia and J. Glancy Jones of Pennsylvania. It was also about this time that Blair was denouncing the Lecompton Constitution and telling his friends that the Free-Soilers were going to grind the noses off the "Buchaneers." The whole Free-Soil North, except the Republicans of Illinois, were lauding Douglas for his opposition to the administrative measure in the form of the Lecompton Constitution. Some time between March 2 and May 17, Blair presumably wrote his cousin Gratz Brown a letter telling of a secret meeting with Douglas. Sturgeon of St. Louis hurriedly wrote to Buchanan on May 17 the following letter:[7]

I have just learned in a way that I cannot give names matters in reference to Judge Douglass which I think you ought to know. A gentleman of undoubted veracity and of standing accidentally saw a letter written by Frank P. Blair Jr. to B. Gratz Brown, editor of the St. Louis Democrat, stating that Judge Douglass had sent for him [Blair] & that they had had an interview in which Douglass told him that he would be with them [Republicans] in 1860, that he was done with the Democratic Party—that he did not intend to break off now but so that misconstruction might not be placed on his acts and to satisfy the Democrat, he gave this opinion to Blair. As I understand it he intends to act with his own party, professing to be a Democrat, but the treason lurking in his rotten and corrupt heart to destroy the party in 1860 & he deems this the best way of doing it.

I wish that no use should be made of names or locating where this

[6] Buchanan MSS. Philadelphia Library. Mar. 2, 1858. Sturgeon, a Kentuckian, moved to St. Louis, was an active, shrewd, pro-slavery politician.

[7] Buchanan MSS.

information was had as it would probably place a gentleman (not myself) in an awkward and I might say dishonorable position. You are now aware by not the shadow of a doubt that the treason is intended and the best plan of executing it is undergoing consideration between him and the Black Republicans ally Blair. . . .

. . . I will see you in Washington between 10 & 15 inst. when I will give you verbally the reasons why in charging the treason to Douglass it should not be stated that Blair had so written to Brown—after awhile this explicit charge can be made, but if made now Brown could no doubt trace it to the man who accidentally saw the letter to Brown from Blair.

It seems to me that we should just charge that the pledge has been given and that it cannot with truth be denied.

There appeared at one time some chance of concerted action between Douglas and the Republicans. He intimated to Schuyler Colfax that he very probably would not act with the Democracy in the future and he told Henry Wilson that "he had checked his baggage and taken a through ticket." Greeley conferred twice with Douglas at Douglas's home and Dame Rumor soon had it that Douglas was to be run for President on the Republican ticket in 1860. Douglas may have hoped that he might be able to organize a Constitutional Union party, but he was soon disillusioned if he thought the Republicans as a party would follow him. "I see his tracks all over our State," wrote Medill of the Chicago *Tribune,* "they point only in one direction; not a single toe is turned toward the Republican camp. Watch him, use him, but do not trust him—not an inch." [8]

Rumors that Blair would support Douglas in his campaign against Lincoln in 1858 persisted enough to cause some alarm among the friends of the latter.[9] As a matter of fact Blair was in a predicament in St. Louis. His Free-Soil followers among the Democrats wanted to defeat the forces of the administration by causing a rift in the party through their support of Douglas. Blair preferred to defeat the Democracy by encouraging party factions within it. That was what the Democrats did not want to happen. Senator James S. Green of Missouri, a pro-slavery Democrat, wrote to Judge Treat that: "We want no divisions concerning

[8] Allen Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York, 1908), ch. 16; Henry Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power* (3 vols., Boston, 1872-77), II, 367.

[9] Joseph Fort Newton, *Lincoln and Herndon* (Cedar Rapids, 1910), 228.

men in our State. We must remain united if we expect to command influence in the National Councils, and accomplish any good. To that end we must indulge a difference of opinion concerning *men,* while, with regard to the *essential* principles of the party we remain a *unit* in *sentiment* and prepared for unity of action." [10]

Blair kept his own counsel until he saw that dallying with the Democratic factions would gain nothing in the election of 1858; after that he announced for Lincoln and supported him with speech and pen.

The Republicans of Illinois owed Lincoln their nomination for the Senate. He had sacrificed himself for Trumbull in the last election, and Trumbull and his friends were grateful to him for it.

Lincoln was a practical psychologist, an able lawyer, and a formidable disputant. His intellect which was of the highest order was not befogged with intemperance nor limited with bigotry. His fine sense of humor relieved him from his attacks of melancholy. He was misunderstood by those who mistook his homely wit and story-telling as an evidence of crudity. Men who met him liked him better as they knew him longer, because they found a diamond beneath the surface. In him was the epitome of frontier idealism.

Unlike Jackson, Lincoln was a student. Born in the log cabin of a Kentucky mountaineer, he had succeeded in educating himself to think clearly and to express his thoughts in a pure English style remarkable for its clarity and lucidity. He came from the common people; he knew their language, and he spoke unmistakably to them. He was not a miracle, nor was he a swamp flower, nor did he come from a place where civilization was lost. He was as much a self-made man as that is possible. He despised artificialities and fully accepted the political theories set forth by Jefferson in his Declaration of Independence. His unusual mind made him mentally superior to his neighbors. He had little temper and he was free from the passion of a Franklin or a Hamilton. He recognized his shortcomings, trained himself, played with his mental ability, but he did not go to the extent

[10] Treat MSS., Canton, Missouri, Sept. 29, 1858.

that Franklin did in the development of habits, or in the purposeful formation of character. He possessed poetic qualities, perhaps as a result of his life in the vast expanse of the lonely frontier. His love for poor Ann Rutledge and his inexpressible disappointment at her death is evidence of his soulful nature. Sentimental memories clung to him while he fought throughout his life to ward off melancholy. To him marriage was a duty. In the fulfillment of that duty he was taken by Mary Todd, a woman socially his superior, capable, temperamental, and ambitious. He had a tendency toward laziness. He liked to stretch, to yawn, to tell stories, to laugh and talk. He had dreams, hunches, and a poetic insight into human nature that distinguishes him from Washington. His will power developed with the exigencies of each crisis in his life. At such times his power of concentraton was unusual. His intensity of thought consumed his strength and made relaxation afterwards a necessity. He aspired to be a political leader, a statesman, and his nomination to the senatorship afforded him an opportunity to measure strength with the best known politician in the United States.

Early in the campaign Lincoln attacked the Dred Scott decision. A cheering multitude in the Republican convention that nominated him for Senator heard him solemnly declare that "a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. . . . It will become all one thing, or the other."

Douglas recognized in Lincoln a powerful opponent. He said to his close friend, John W. Forney, after the nomination of Lincoln: "I shall have my hands full. He is the strong man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates—and the best stump speaker, with his droll dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd, and if I beat him my victory will be hardly won." [11] Before the joint debates were staged he took direct issue with Lincoln on his attack upon the Dred Scott decision and to a cheering audience he said: "I have no idea of appealing from the decision of the supreme court upon a constitutional question to the decision of a tumultuous town meeting." [12] Cheering throngs greeted him

[11] John W. Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men* (2 vols., New York, 1873), II, 179.
[12] Beveridge, *Lincoln*, II, 595.

everywhere in Illinois. They applauded his accusation that Lincoln's doctrine of a house divided against itself was fanaticism stirring up sectionalism. Friends urged Lincoln to assume the rôle of challenger and leader in the campaign. But Lincoln needed to warm up to the fight. He had not reached his "crisis." Finally his challenge was issued to the great satisfaction of some of his friends. Douglas accepted reluctantly.

Seven debates were held in as many towns widely scattered over Illinois between August 21 and October 15, 1858. The first was held at Ottawa a few days over two weeks after the Kansans had decisively defeated the Lecompton Constitution; the last one was held at Alton. At Ottawa, farmers with their families were on their way to the town by sunrise. Men and women came in buggies, wagons, carts, on horseback, and on foot. By nine o'clock the roads were filled with vehicles, pedestrians, horses, whole delegations and cavalcades. By ten o'clock the crowds had stirred the dust of the hot road into thick clouds and the noisy little city was in a haze. Banners, flags, floats and mottoes told the sightseers to what party this or that delegation belonged. Everywhere the buildings were decorated and bands blared, country fife and drum corps rattled and shrilled, cannon roared, and men and boys shouted "Hurrah for Lincoln!" "Hurrah for Douglas!" "Hurrah for Old Abe!" "Hurrah for Little Dug!"

The debaters agreed to alternate in opening and closing the debates as they traveled from place to place. Douglas opened and closed at Ottawa and Lincoln at Freeport, the town in which the second debate was held.[13] The contrast between the two men was extraordinary. Douglas was short, compact, solidly built, well proportioned, and attractively attired. His life-long experience had taught him how to dress, and now his new second wife, a beautiful society belle of Washington, D. C., the former Miss Adele Cutts, was traveling with him! She mixed with the women and sat on the stage while she campaigned for her husband. Lincoln was tall, lank, awkward and ugly. His ill-fitting garments failed to conceal his oddities; in fact, they appeared to accentuate them. Douglas bowed gracefully and courteously with an air of confidence, as if to say, "You owe me your support." Lin-

[13] Tarbell, *op. cit.*, I, ch. 18.

coln was uncouth and diffident and somewhat uncertain of himself. He appeared to ask: "Will you support me because of the principles which I advocate?"

There was little new argument introduced after the debates began. Each candidate tried to pick flaws in the statements of the other to maneuver his opponent into an embarrassing position. At Ottawa Douglas read into his speech an alleged Republican platform which he charged Lincoln with having endorsed in 1854. It was, unknown to Douglas, a set of resolutions adopted by the Kane County Convention at Aurora. It had been greatly toned down at Springfield in order to get Lincoln and other Whigs to endorse it. This fact, of which Douglas was unaware, gave the Republican press a chance to label him a liar and a forger, an advantage which Lincoln quickly pressed home and kept it up to the discomposure of his antagonist throughout the campaign.

For an hour Lincoln sat on the platform at Ottawa and listened to Douglas deliver a scorching speech. Cries of "true," "good," "hit him again" and applause and laughter rang out from the Democrats during the course of the speech. Nearing the close Douglas accused Lincoln of going around like "all the little Abolition orators, who go around and lecture in the basements of schools and churches." He did not question Lincoln's "conscientious belief that the negro was made his equal, and hence his brother"; but for his part, he did not regard the negro as his own equal, and he "positively" denied that the negro was his kin or brother. As for Lincoln's house-divided-against-itself speech, that was nothing short of pure sectionalism. Let each state and territory settle its own negro question.[14]

When Lincoln slowly straightened himself and stepped forward to answer, his friends who were in the majority let loose a deafening roar that lasted until he begged them to allow him to speak. He denied any knowledge of the set of resolutions which Douglas had read. He read from his speech at Peoria in 1854 to prove that he was not an abolitionist. He met the charge that he preached negro equality with the whites by saying that he be-

[14] *Political Debates Between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas* (Cleveland, 1895), 101-11.

lieved in the superiority of the white race, that the negro was not his equal in color, "perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment," but in "the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hands earn, *he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.*" [15] He asked Judge Douglas if a "house divided against itself *can stand,*" and insisted that he answer it. "I leave it to you [the people] to say whether, in the history of our government, this institution of slavery has not always failed to be a bond of union, and, on the contrary, been an apple of discord and an element of division in the house." Slavery is now on a new basis, placed there by Judge Douglas and his friends. "And while it is placed upon this new basis, I say, and I have said, that I believe we shall not have peace upon the question until the opponents of slavery arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or, on the other hand, that its advocates will push it forward until it shall become lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

At that a voice asked what he would do with popular sovereignty. "My understanding," he replied, "is that Popular Sovereignty, as now applied to the question of slavery, does allow the people of a Territory to have slavery if they want to, but does not allow them *not* to have it if they *do not* want it." He recurred to the Dred Scott decision accusing Douglas of hanging on to it as a dog to a piece of meat. When public sentiment reaches an exact accordance with that of Judge Douglas "then it needs only the formality of the second Dred Scott decision, which he indorses in advance, to make slavery alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South." [16]

The fight raged on during the debates with Republican papers justly screaming "Forgery" at Douglas and the Democratic press crying sectionalism at Lincoln. Lincoln studiously prepared his speeches, always refusing to be provoked by Douglas into some rash statement. Some of his friends were disappointed in his speech at Ottawa. Theodore Parker of Boston criticized his evasiveness. By the time the Freeport debate was to be held, he had

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*

carefully prepared his answers to Douglas' questions and had decided to ask Douglas a pertinent question that would in all likelihood lead to the election of Douglas to the Senate. It was not original, but it proved to be the undoing of Douglas in 1860. The question was: "Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?" [17]

Douglas tried to eat the bait without springing the trap and so announced his "Freeport doctrine." Yes, they could exclude slavery by lawful means, he answered. "It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a Territory under the Constitution, the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulations." Lincoln's friends, Joseph Medill of the Chicago *Tribune,* Elihu Washburne, and Norman B. Judd, begged him to change this particular Freeport question, or omit it altogether. They believed that Douglas could answer it satisfactorily enough to win the senatorial election. Douglas coolly answered it and said he hoped Mr. Lincoln deemed his answer satisfactory. Lincoln's friends were right; he lost the race in 1858, but he won it in 1860. He believed that the South would repudiate Douglas if he answered satisfactorily enough to please his constituents in Illinois. He reduced Douglas to a sectional leader, the very thing that Douglas accused Lincoln of being, and the thing which he wished to avoid for himself. The contest waxed hotter as it progressed. The frenzied campaign for Frémont was tame as compared to this one. Douglas traveled in a special car and on special trains. He was hailed by the roar of cannon and thousands of Democrats who provided the best means of transportation to and from train. Lincoln, poor in worldly goods, traveled as an ordinary citizen and sometimes on local freight trains. He was hauled about as a poor man's friend, in wagons, in carts, and on hay frames. Noted Republican orators stumped the state for him. Lyman Trumbull, Lovejoy, Wash-

[17] *Political Debates, op. cit.,* 133-42.

burne, and many men of lesser note labored night and day for Lincoln. Frederick Douglas, a noted negro orator, spoke for him. The Blairs considered Douglas a "nut," a dangerous character, and a jackass. Frank rode with Lincoln in the procession at Springfield and at Jacksonville, and spoke for Lincoln in the campaign. His paper, the *Democrat,* published reports of the campaign and supported Lincoln. Douglas was uncertain of victory. Several factors were against him. Times were dull, taxes high, the panic of 1857 was not over, and Douglas had been out of the State so long that he had lost the advantage of personal contacts. People believed him to be a rich man and a drinking man. His marriage to a Catholic by a priest was no political asset in the eyes of Protestant preachers who had recently felt the thrills of Know-nothingism. They hammered at Douglas during the campaign. The charming Mrs. Douglas dressed in the height of fashion may or may not have gained votes for her husband by mingling freely with the sturdy farm women with their homespun garments, cracked hands, and bronzed faces. Douglas, realizing that his chance of reëlection was very uncertain, wired his friend, Usher F. Linder of Charleston, after the debate at Ottawa: "The hell-hounds are on my track. For God's sake, Linder, come and help me fight them." The operator made a pretty penny by selling a copy of the telegram to the Republicans who had it published. They were gleefully delighted at the discomfiture of Douglas and exultantly declared that "The Little Giant is done for." [18]

The counting of the final vote, which was an unusually heavy one, showed that the Douglas men had polled 174,000 votes to 190,000 for the Lincoln men. A successful Gerrymandering of the state, however, had given the Democratic party a majority in the legislature. In the final vote for senator, Lincoln received forty-six votes to fifty-four for Douglas who was declared elected.

Lincoln's speeches were extensively read and published on the front pages of the daily newspapers of the East. He was admired for his logic and clearness of expression. He was advertised nationally at the expense of Douglas, and his friends in Illinois decided to groom him for the presidency in 1860. On the other

[18] Beveridge, *Lincoln,* II, ch. 9; 654-55.

hand, pæans of praise were showered upon the victor by the Eastern Republican newspapers because, to them, he was the enemy of Buchanan. Douglas was now the glorious son of a great country, a son who enjoyed the plaudits of the populace. Few men would have risked a wager that he would not be nominated for the presidency by the Democrats in 1860. It was generally conceded outside Illinois that Douglas had got the better of Lincoln in debate, and it was not otherwise known until the publication of their speeches in book form in 1860. Then Lincoln's power in dialectic in his moral cause became apparent. At last he won the battle which Douglas had hoped to win.

Meantime the elections in Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Pennsylvania were adverse to the administration. The people at large were greatly impressed with the overwhelming defeat of the administration in the President's own state. Pennsylvania was considered a Democratic stronghold, but that party elected only three out of twenty-eight members to Congress. Buchanan facetiously wrote to his niece about it: "We have met the enemy in Pennsylvania, and we are theirs."

In New York, Seward made his celebrated speech at Rochester which was to attract more attention than any other speech between 1850 and 1860. He produced no new argument. What he said had been previously said by Blair and Lincoln. But it was especially important to have Seward, the great Republican leader in New York, say that the slaveholders dictated to the Democracy; that the forces of freedom were superior to the evils of slavery; and that "it is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation." Seward delivered this speech four months after Lincoln had delivered his house-divided speech. There is no proof that he took his ideas from Lincoln; he would, says Rhodes, have scorned to quote the rail-splitter of Illinois. Jefferson Davis considered Seward the master mind of the Republican party. Douglas thought Seward would be the Republican nominee in 1860. Politicians considered the "irrepressible conflict" speech, coming as it did from a "political philosopher" and experienced statesman, as especially significant.

What could the South expect, if Seward were elected President of the United States!

3

The breach between the Blairs and the Democracy was an irreparable one long before Frank reappeared in St. Louis to conduct his campaign for reëlection. Frank had been read out of the party, Montgomery had been dismissed from office, and the elder Blair had become anathema to any orthodox Democrat. Frank could not again run as a Democrat as he had in 1856, and speak and vote as a Republican. Men like Sturgeon of St. Louis could not bear the traitorous Blairs. The old Calhoun clique determined to rid themselves of Frank Blair, whom they designated the "Black Republican," once for all.

Blair resented the term "Black Republican." He respected himself as a Jacksonian Democrat who had remained loyal to the tenets of the party while the Southern Democracy had fallen on evil ways. He called his party the "Freed Democracy." That term was more acceptable to the Free-Soil Democrats and to any who might oppose Buchanan. It better appealed to the Irish in St. Louis. He relied on Broadhead and Boernstein to hold the Germans loyal to him while he was in Washington.

The Free Democracy of St. Louis and County held its nominating convention in Washington Hall, June, 1858. The building was crowded to its capacity with anti-administration men bubbling over with enthusiasm. Every mention of Blair's name was greeted with deafening applause. His record in Congress was unanimously endorsed. General James B. Gardenshire of Jefferson City, in a highly complimentary speech, called him "the rising statesman and representative man of the West most to be relied upon to impress Congress with the fact that there is a Great West, with navigation, commerce and agricultural interests not to be overlooked in national legislation. His speech on the Pacific Railroad was worthy the successor of Benton. . . ." [19]

His nomination for Congress was received with loud and prolonged cheering interspersed with calls for "Blair!" "Blair!" He said that from the earliest dawn of this movement in favor of free

[19] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, July 6, 1858.

white labor in Missouri, he had been "keeping step to the music, nor could the threats of enemies, nor any cause whatever, deter him from supporting the rights of his free white fellow citizens." He closed with a promise to debate with his enemies on the issues in the campaign, and the convention soon afterwards adopted six resolutions. The first affirmed their adherence to the principles of Jefferson, and condemned all kinds of monopolies; others denounced the reckless extravagance of the Buchanan administration, its failure to develop facilities for transportation in the West, the Lecompton Constitution, and the tariff. They resolved that they were "opposed to negro equality" with white men and that they believed the extinction of slavery would benefit Missouri. "Give us Missouri for white men, and white men for Missouri," they said.[20]

Blair's Democratic opponent was Richard Barret who at that time was a promising young politician. He was familiarly known as "Dick" Barret. An amiable Kentuckian who had gone to Missouri when he was a youth, he entered the St. Louis schools, studied law, and after he was admitted to the bar, he competed with such able lawyers as Edward Bates and Henry S. Geyer. As an orthodox Democrat he wisely stood on the platform of 1856 and made a strong plea for party harmony.

The Democracy under the leadership of Senator Trusten Polk and James S. Green fought with its back to the wall in St. Louis. It used the President wherever possible. Appointments to appeal to the Germans were urged and used to weaken the political strength of Blair with them. The Democrats consorted with the Know-nothings in order to defeat that "Black-Republican-Blair." Green insisted that because the Democrats could not agree on a national leader was no reason why the Democrats of the state should suffer a breach in their ranks. Party harmony and beat Blair, he said, should be their slogans.

The Blairs fully realized the seriousness of the situation in which Frank found himself when he began his campaign. They believed that his contest for reëlection was not less than second in importance to that of Lincoln with Douglas. They could no

[20] *Ibid.*

longer enjoy the support of Benton; that noble old warrior had died from the effects of cancer, April 10, 1858. His political power had been swept away in defeats, but no sooner had his body reached St. Louis for interment than did the Democracy claim him as its own. Like the fickleness of the mob it changed its temper from that of berating him to that of effusive tributes by mouth and pen. Probably twenty-five thousand people viewed his remains as they lay in state in Mercantile Hall in St. Louis. It appeared, during the procession to the grave in Bellefontaine cemetery, that "the entire population of the region" had gathered along the streets.

In the politics of 1858 Benton was more powerful in death than he could have been in life. Both party factions sought to quote him in the Congressional campaign. The Democracy pointed effectively to Benton's support of Buchanan instead of his son-in-law in 1856 as proof that he opposed Black-Republicanism. It must be remembered that he supported Buchanan because, according to his own explanation, he feared that the election of Frémont might lead to a disruption of the Union. Actually, Benton was too staunch a Democrat to bolt the ticket and vote for a Republican. On the other hand, he continued to oppose the extension of slavery to the day of his death. He thought the Dred Scott decision was "a palpable error and wrong." He denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act as "all fraud, cheat, trick, swindle, quackery, charlatanry, demagoguery, bladdery, and legislative blackleggery." The Lecompton Constitution was worse, if that were possible.

We now know through his biographer and especially through a letter of Senator James Rood Doolittle what were Benton's opinions of the Buchanan administration. The scrupulously religious Senator, while on his way to Washington, wrote from New York City to his wife saying that he had visited at the home of the Frémonts in that city and that Mrs. Frémont read to him parts of a letter which she had just received from her ailing father. In the letter Benton expressed himself on "the sport reign of the so-called Democratic Party which had neither a principle or a measure in common with the Democratic party of Jefferson

& Jackson's days." [21] This letter is corroborative of what the Blairs said were the views of Benton on Buchanan's policy.

The ablest biographer of Benton says his last audible words before his death were: "I am comfortable and content." [22] The Blairs claimed that that contentment came to him only in his last moments, because only a few days before he died, they said, he revealed in a husky whisper his disgust at Buchanan's policy on slavery. The publication of a report of this interview—a friendly family conversation—in the New York *Tribune* brought on a harmful quarrel between the Blairs and two of Benton's sons-in-law who took umbrage at it. Columns of space in the newspapers were wasted with their charges, explanations, and countercharges. Frank claimed responsibility for the publication of the report.[23] He explained that his father cheerfully agreed to the publication of it believing "that it was honorable to Col. Benton to make it known that at such moment he should be forgetful of himself and concerned only for the public safety."

Frank said there was nothing new in it. Benton, he declared, had expressed similar sentiments in language equally emphatic. Blair, senior, maintained that Benton had been for some time so disgusted with the Buchanan administration that he was inclined to unite with the Republican party.[24] The letter which Benton wrote to his daughter, and which the latter read to Senator Doolittle, indicates that he was greatly dissatisfied with the administration, and is similar in spirit to seven resolutions which the Blairs said Benton drew up and asked Frank to introduce in Congress. In them Benton attacked the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Dred Scott by declaring that the judicial power of the Supreme Court did not extend to political questions and that its decisions in such cases were null and void; that only Congress possessed the power to legislate for territories; and that the Territory of Arizona was free by act of the Mexican government and treaty of Guadaloupe Hidalgo. It is true, furthermore, that the life-long course of Benton had been one opposed to such

[21] James R. Doolittle MSS., in the Library of the State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. The letter is not dated, but it must have been written in the fall of 1857.

[22] Meigs, *Benton*, 517.

[23] Letter to New York *Tribune* of May 22; *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, May 28, 1858.

[24] F. P. Blair, Sr., "To the Public," May 20, 1858, in *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, May 28, 1858.

principles as Buchanan supported when he lauded the Dred Scott decision and recommended the admission of the Kansas Territory under the Lecompton Constitution.

There probably would have been little notice taken of the report of the interview which Blair, senior, had with Benton, if it had appeared when human passions were not running so high. It was promulgated at election time to help Frank win the votes of the followers and admirers of his old preceptor. Greeley, who was warmly supporting Frank, must have been pleased to learn that Benton had turned against Buchanan. The Washington *Union,* the organ of the administration, was duty bound to denounce the Blairs and defend Buchanan and his friends. The Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois, Seward's speech on the "irrepressible conflict," and the notorious Lecompton Constitution were the factors which engendered hatred in the breasts of men. William Carey Jones, who had married Eliza Benton, and who had just returned prior to the death of Benton from an appointment abroad, was in no mood to allow any one to malign his benefactor, the President. R. T. Jacob, another son-in-law, who married Sarah Benton, came from Kentucky to be at the death-bed of his father-in-law. Jones inveigled Jacob into helping him to refute the Blair story. Republican party doctrines were repugnant to Jacob; he supported Breckinridge for President in 1860 and General Geo. B. McClellan in 1864; but he rendered his country valuable services as a soldier during the Civil War. The third party to agree with Jones was Col. Jacob Hall of Missouri, a friend of the Benton family, who happened to be at the Benton home when the interview between Blair and Benton took place. Hall, like Jacob and Frémont, was a Western pathfinder, and had been lately enjoying mail contracts and eating at the public crib.

The actors in this dramatic episode performed their first parts about or near the death-bed of Benton. His life had been slipping with certainty for years and now it was time for cancer to claim him as its victim. In spite of his weakness, he sat propped in bed during his last months of illness gasping for breath as he worked to complete his *Abridgement of Debates.* Friends came from far and near to inquire about him, to speak with, to sympathize, and to go away in sorrow realizing that the Old Roman of the Senate

could not live long. According to Jones, Benton personally requested that Buchanan come to see him. Buchanan came on April 9, the day before the death of Benton. The meeting, says Jones, was cordial. Sarah Jacob was by request the third person present. Buchanan wrote to Horatio King in 1866 that the interview was a "kind and affectionate" one, but it may be well to remember that Buchanan was then gathering data "to leave behind me some interesting reminiscences." [25] Sometime after the death of Benton, Jacob claimed that his father-in-law had said to the President: "Buchanan we are friends; we have differed on many points, as you well know, but I always trusted in your integrity of purpose. I supported you in preference to Frémont, because he headed a sectional party, whose success would have been the signal for disunion. . . . I have that faith in you now, but you must look to a higher power to support and guide you."

It was certainly possible for Benton, whose dissolution was in process, to forgive Buchanan a few hours before his death. In his home Benton was a lovable character, a devoted father and husband. His forgiveness of Buchanan's errors and his warning to look to God for guidance was human. The importance of the story of the Buchanan interview lay in its relation to the Blair interview and to the election in St. Louis. It came after the Blair interview and, according to Jones and Jacob, should have superseded or counteracted anything which Blair alleged that Benton said to him.

When the elder Blair called to see Benton next to the last time,[26] he had no intention of giving the gist of their conversation to the public. He went as an old and intimate friend of the family who saw in Benton the passing of his third greatest friend —first, Andrew Jackson, then Silas Wright, now Benton. Upon his entrance to the sick room Benton welcomed him and conversed with him for some time with much animation. The patient's strength was unequal to the ordeal of a protracted conversation and soon his exhausted voice fell to a whisper which caused Blair to lean over the bed with his ear close to Benton's face to catch the meaning of his words.

[25] Moore, *Works of Buchanan,* XI, 415.
[26] On April 6, a few days before Benton died.

Across the room sat Jones at work with some papers. Jacob Hall was not in the house. Benton, knowing the sentiment of Blair, conversed freely on subjects of national importance. Blair had been in the habit for many years of telling him what he knew of politics of the day, and since he had been very ill, Blair had cheered him with reports of the apparently successful fight against the Lecompton Constitution. Benton, while speaking of the Nullifiers and the general situation in 1858, at this particular interview "extolled Mr. Clay, and denounced his adversaries. . . . His bosom and eyes seemed to dilate with the expression he labored to give to his sense of what he called the noble patriotism and glorious eloquence of Mr. Clay in his struggle against the enemies of the Union," and as he lay back on his pillow, he said, as he thought of the Nullifiers: "Sir, he throttled them the rascals! he throttled them! Rhett particularly." [27]

The report of the interview of April 6 was reproduced as follows: [28]

Correspondence to N. Y. "Tribune"

Washington, Tuesday, April 6, 1858.

Col. Benton is dying. His disease, cancer of the bowels, has made such progress that he cannot survive much longer. He suffers extreme pain, and is exhausted to almost the degree of physical prostration. But his mind is as clear and as powerful as ever, and the high, resolute, Roman spirit of the old statesman struggles with indomitable energy and fortitude against sickness and weakness and the awful presence of the king of terrors. He dies in harness, working to the last for his country and mankind. An old and intimate friend from Missouri called upon him this morning. Benton was in bed, scarcely able to move hand or foot, and not able to speak much above a whisper. . . .

. . . Col. Benton entered into conversation with his Missouri friend. He told him that in reviewing the events of 1850 he was glad to find that the animosities of the past had died out in his heart, and he was not only ready but eager to do justice to his former rivals and opponents. He spoke with much feeling of Mr. Clay, to whose merits and services he had awarded the highest praise in what he was writing about the compromise period of 1850. He dwelt particularly on the service, the great service, Mr. Clay had rendered to the public at that time by baffling and putting down the traitorous secessionists of the

[27] Blair, Sr., in the New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* May 28, 1858.
[28] *Weekly (Missouri) Democrat,* Apr. 12, 1858.

south, who were seeking to destroy the union and plunge the country into civil war for their own selfish and ambitious purposes.

. . . In energetic whispers, he told his visitor that the same men who had sought to destroy the republic in 1850 were at the bottom of this accursed Lecompton business. Among the greatest of his consolations in dying was the consciousness that the House of Representatives had baffled these treasonable schemes and put the heels of people on the neck of the traitors. Few events in our history had given him so much satisfaction as the defeat of Lecompton. He warmly praised the intrepid and incorruptible Douglas democrats who had registered the power and the wiles of a corrupt and deluded administration.

Jones says he first noticed the report of Frank Blair's interview with the reporter of the New York *Tribune* on Sunday after the death of Benton. After he returned from St. Louis where the body of the deceased was interred he decided with Jacob to challenge the veracity of the Blair report of what they claimed to be the views of Benton on Buchanan and his policy. He claimed that Benton informed him in the summer of 1856 that Blair, senior, was responsible for the early estrangement between the Democratic nominee and himself. From that time Jones considered Blair "a mischievous talebearer," an untrustworthy character "capable of any meanness" and "any crime that was consistent with cowardice." He did "not know nor care" whether the Blair "gossip" about the interview with Benton was "true or false." He knew before he met him that Blair was the most dangerous leader in politics in this country, and he had not hesitated to denounce him in 1856. Now, he proposed to nail fast the lies of those "libellers and death-bed defamers." Jacob agreed that the general tenor of the conversations which he had held with Benton did not imply that he disliked Buchanan. These two Democratic sons-in-law, orthodox in their political faith, determined then to balance their reputations with the Blairs, who, they said, had no regard for the confidence of a dying friend; "no sentiments of propriety, delicacy, or decency restraining them, where a selfish aim is to be gained." [11]

Jones declared that the Blairs hoped to have the report of the interview printed to be used for a campaign document in their "piebald politics" in Missouri. They hoped it might escape the

[11] Washington *Union*, July 28, 1858.

attention of the Benton family until it was accepted as an historic fact. The Blairs should be watched. Ever since the exclusion of old Blair from the official paper in 1845, "his life has been devoted to vindictive attempts on the integrity of the democratic party—to which party, nevertheless, he owed all that he had, all that he was, and all that, with even a seeming of worthiness, he could ever hope to be—and that, to carry that purpose, he would sacrifice any friendship, betray any confidence, and not hesitate at the ruin of his country."

He continued in his tirade which was tiresome, as it was unconvincing. He boasted that Benton was annoyed with the equivocation of Frank Blair in Missouri in the election of 1856, and refused to set him adrift only because of his strong attachment for Frank; that "by permitting his name to be used for the governorship" he had secured the election of Frank as a Democrat to Congress.

Probably one of the most controverted subjects between Jones and the Blairs was an alleged biographical sketch of Benton which was in the possession of the Blairs and written for *Appleton's Cyclopedia.*[80] It contained a paragraph wherein it was stated that Benton was disappointed with Buchanan after his inaugural address in which he commended the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case. The Blairs used it to good advantage. Jones hotly declared it to be written by the Blairs, that it was false, and that Benton had repudiated it one month before he died. Any reader may wonder why Benton permitted it to exist until he suddenly rose from his sick bed to repudiate it—after Jones had come to care for him. Blair, senior, said it was a good thing for Buchanan that Jones reached Washington in time to interpret the views of Benton for him and to arrange meetings between Benton and the Secretary of State and Buchanan. Jones scornfully asked: "'Arranged' by whom? You vilifier; defamer of death-beds; detractor and libeller of the dead; degrader of the proprieties, decencies, and even sanctities of life . . . ?" He rejoiced that he had stopped Blair from talking with Benton and sent him from the room. With such argument Jones participated in the election of 1858

[80] *Weekly (Missouri) Democrat,* May 24, 1858.

fighting the Blairs with all the denunciation that his hot blood urged him to use.

Friends of the administration came to the aid of Jones in his tirades against the Blairs. The Washington *Union* had little love for Benton and less for the Blairs. The editor thought the elder Blair overestimated himself, that his "outpourings of temper engendered by disappointment and expanding malice" had warped a powerful and vigorous pen from the truth.

Duff Green, now in his dotage, entered the arena against the Blairs. He was not certain, however, that Benton did not say all that Blair claimed. Benton was vindictive and selfish, and had probably carried his resentments, like Jackson, to the grave. He knew Buchanan to have been largely responsible for the rise of the corrupt bargain against Clay in 1824, but he had supported Buchanan in 1856, and he was still true to the party. The Blairs should remember that, although Clay and Jackson did believe Buchanan had caused their disagreement in 1824, they came to free him of improper conduct before they died. Copies of the articles and pamphlets by Jones and Green were sent to St. Louis just before the election. The Missouri *Democrat* pronounced them "vulgar abuse and low defamation" of harpies, and an insult to the people of the City.

Frank Blair made a calm and dignified answer to the articles published by Jones, according to the *Democrat,* and defended the views and character of Benton as interpreted by the Blairs. In his speech before an enthusiastic Republican mass meeting on July 31, he used his powers of speech against the "vermin" which the President was sending to St. Louis. He did not conceive it to be within his province to take "this man [Jones] by the throat; for although I might benefit the public by acting as executioner of all the vermin the administration keeps, yet this man—who alternates between *mania pater* [sic] and the kitchen of the White House—I leave for his own voice to destroy. (Cheers)." Jones, almost beside himself with anger upon reading Blair's speech, wrote to the people of the City that the lying Blair did not dare lay his dastard hand on him.

The Jacob letter of August 2, written to corroborate the letters

which Jones had written months earlier, failed to get into print before August 10.

Meantime the campaign in St. Louis County was drawing to a close. On July 31, the Republicans gathered in mass in Washington Square to hear Blair speak. It was a hopeful, wildly cheerful throng with its banners, streamers, mottoes, and bands. Mottoes in huge letters blazed forth: "Blair and the Whole Ticket," and "F. P. Blair, the White Man's Friend." After customary preliminaries thousands of men began calling for "Blair! Blair!! Blair!!!" The wildest applause broke loose and lasted for over ten minutes when he appeared.[31]

He thanked them for past favors and then launched, Blair fashion, into his subject. He had fought the Lecompton Constitution on what he deemed "Democratic grounds. (Cheers)." Another deputation with torch lights arrived at this point in his speech; with bands playing and the firing of rockets, the shouting throngs kept up the din for another ten minutes. Cheered by the noisy demonstration, he cried out, "this election is already over." Loud and prolonged cheers was the response from the people. He saw the entire Buchanan corps of renegades "in one grand funeral pile. (Loud cheers)." The verdict was already pronounced: "We are to have white men for Missouri and Missouri for white men. (Prolonged cheers)." The administration at Washington had not one scintilla of a democratic principle; its pledges were forfeited, and it lay at the feet of the slave oligarchy. Its profligate expenditures were robbing the Treasury; in one year of peace it had spent more than Polk did on the Mexican War; and it had resorted to the issuance of shinplaster (Treasury notes) to save itself. It had repudiated the volunteer forces of America and asked for a standing army. Its hostility to Western interests had been shown in its attitude toward mail contractors; they were not allowed to start at St. Louis, but were forced to begin farther south and go westward thus lengthening their route by twelve hundred miles. He closed with a prediction that the people would win the fight against an administration that was attempting to replace free institutions with slavery. He sat down amid the wildest cheers

[31] Missouri *Democrat,* Aug. 2.

for "Free Labor and Frank Blair," and the *Democrat* in reporting the speech on election day, said, verily, "the knell of slavery has sounded in Missouri! Hurrah for Blair!"

The contest in St. Louis County was close. All day long on August 2 men were rushed to the polls. Among them was a future celebrity, but on that day he was merely Captain Grant, who voted against Blair.[32] Over 1800 more votes were cast in August than in the April elections of the same year. The Washington *Union* jubilantly announced on August 10 that Barret had defeated Blair by 426 votes. "The triumph," said the St. Louis *Republican* of August 4, "is the most signal that has ever been recorded," and the editor of the Washington *Union* solemnly declared that it was remarkable that the elections should open with the ejection from Congress of the most objectionable man in it, that apostate and reckless Blair; he believed the defeat of Blair in Missouri meant that emancipation of slaves in his state and the border states was a long way off.

On the face of the returns the election was won by Barret in a very questionable manner. The ballot boxes were undoubtedly stuffed by hundreds of fraudulent votes. Irish bullies were used to frighten timid supporters of the Republicans from the polls, and it was rather evident that money was used effectively. The *Republican* said the defeat of Blair was done deliberately and done squarely; the editor of the *Democrat* said the Republicans had contested every foot of ground, and that they would not despair nor surrender; "We have," said Brown, "unfurled the flag for 1860, and come weal come woe, this journal will not strike its colors in the conflict."[33]

Blair claimed a majority of 91 votes and carried the contest to Congress where the Committee on Elections compiled a one thousand page report on the subject.[34] On June 5, 1860, the House decided to allow Blair and Barret two hours each to present their cases. A majority of the investigating committee had reported in favor of Blair. After the friends of each man had sparred for some time for the advantageous rebuttal in the debate, it was

[32] U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (2 vols., New York, 1885), I, 573.
[33] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Dec. 26; St. Louis *Republican*, Aug. 3, 4; Washington *Union*, Aug. 5, 10, 19, 26; Missouri *Democrat*, Aug. 3, 4, 5, and Dec. 21.
[34] *Cong. Globe*, 1st Sess., Part 3, 1859-60, 2645.

finally agreed to allow Blair an opening speech of an hour and a half and the rebuttal lasting a half-hour. Barret was to speak two hours. The contestants spoke on June 6, 1860, only nineteen days prior to adjournment of the First Session of the 35th Congress.

The Congress before which the contestants spoke is known in history for its scenes of charges and countercharges, defiant debates, and threats of secession by the Southern "fire-eaters." Senator J. W. Grimes wrote to his wife during the session that most of the members on both sides carried deadly weapons and that their respective friends in the galleries were armed. Violent collisions between hot-headed members were narrowly averted. The Republicans had a plurality, but not an absolute majority in the House, and a minority in the Senate. They held the Speakership of the House in the person of the moderate minded William Pennington whom they had elected upon the forty-fourth ballot. It was almost impossible to pass legislation under the circumstances. Subjects like John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, the resolutions of Jefferson Davis, and Helper's *Impending Crisis,* which sixty-four Republicans had endorsed, and the homestead bill which Buchanan vetoed in June furnished enough material for embittered discussions until the end of the session. Meantime Democrats and Republicans were angling for a victory in the coming presidential election.

Blair offered four reasons why he should be seated. He spoke slowly and deliberately as he charged that enough fraudulent and illegal votes were cast, which if rejected would leave the victory to him; that the illegal conduct of Barret's partisan judges and officers vitiated the election in enough precincts to elect him; that the judges in six precincts refused to take the oath of office, and if those votes were thrown out, he would be elected; and that Barret had personally participated in corruption and bribery.

The debate became a little exciting when Barret began his reply which was replete with personal abuse of Blair. The friends of the latter remonstrated in vain. The speaker, claiming the election by 607 votes, accused Blair of forcing himself upon an unwilling people, of lacking the attributes of a gentleman, and of making the Hall of the House a *hustings.* He called the report of the Committee on Elections which had favored his opponent,

"Blair's Lame Excuse" for an unexpected defeat. He made the accusation that Blair had flitted from party to party in his desperate attempts to gain political preference. He ran, said Barret, on the Buchanan ticket in 1856 and then was lionized throughout the North as a champion of liberty.

He scornfully made thrusts at the Missouri *Democrat,* that self-styled righteous newspaper of the Republicans, and its great legislator, Francis P. Blair, the so-called "Randolph of the West," "the star Representative" from St. Louis. How wonderful was this man Blair!

He handled roughly the charge that there was substantial corruption at the polls. He called Blair a libeler, a man who was not over-modest nor over-scrupulous in his claims. His masterly power in refutation of evidence on alleged corruption on a large scale was convincing to willing Democrats, but not to others. When the tired Congress reached a vote it decided 94 to 92 not to seat Barret and 93 to 91 to seat Blair, who took the oath of a Congressman on June 8.

At last by a vote of Congress Blair was declared to be the choice of the people. In his speech Barret had referred to the Blair-Benton interview and to the correspondence between Jones and the Blairs. The decision of Congress and the election in 1860 made that a dead issue. Buchanan was rapidly approaching the shelf, the Republicans had hopes of victory, and the Blairs had not time to waste on a personal dispute that had served its purpose. They were busy in their attempt to avoid a war over slavery through the colonization of the negro at state expense.

CHAPTER XXV

The Blair Proposal to Prevent Civil War

It is the true mission of a superior and enlightened race to protect and establish with well-founded institutions the feebler races within the reach of its influence. The general welfare requires this, and renders it the exalted duty of powerful nations.

—F. P. Blair, Jr., 1859.

The Blairs believed the nation would be drenched in blood if immediate abolition were attempted. They, with Lincoln, accepted in theory the doctrines of Seward and the abolitionists, only to the extent that the nation must become free through gradual and voluntary emancipation. True to his preaching, Frank began in 1858 to free his slaves. He first freed Henry Dupe and then in 1859 he went before the circuit court in St. Louis to set free Sarah Dupe, wife of Henry, and her three children—"in consideration of faithful services and for divers other good and sufficient reasons moving me thereto. . . . I do hereby grant Courtenay, Caroline, Sallie, and Sarah as perfect freedom as if they had been born free." [1] Montgomery had refused to become a heavy slaveholder because slavery was opposed to his avowed principles of liberty. The elder Blair owned or controlled a number of slaves and laborers at Silver Spring, some of whom had drifted onto his estate where they were humanely treated.

To emancipate the negro did not solve the problem of what to do with him afterwards. Wise men were baffled with the question of what should be done with the free negro. A freedman was feared and despised by the masters, neglected by all classes, and subject to the vicissitudes of social inequalities. He was often a lazy, worthless subject given to vagabondage and inclined to tamper with slaves whom he sought to help escape to the North.

[1] Walter B. Stevens, *Centennial History of Missouri* (4 vols., St. Louis, 1921), II, 674.

Southern states through legislative acts denied him the right of domicile within their boundaries. Missouri and Arkansas declared that a master could not free his slaves before he gave a bond for two thousand dollars that the negroes would leave the state.

The North loved the free negroes most when they were in the South. The states of Illinois, Oregon, and Indiana denied entrance to free negroes. By general custom free negroes were forbidden the right to militia service and jury duty. They were not allowed to vote in Connecticut and several western states. White schools were usually closed to freedmen, and they were, with few exceptions, ostracized in society.

The disposal of the free negroes was a problem which the Blairs, with thousands of well-meaning individuals, hoped to solve through the colonization of freedmen in some suitable land and climate. The idea was an old one. It had found support among slaveholders who had viewed the increase in free negroes with a great deal of apprehension, and among the humanitarians who hoped it might lead to general emancipation. As early as 1816 a Colonization Society was incorporated for the purpose which its name indicates. Statesmen like Jefferson, Clay, Randolph, and Mason heartily sanctioned the designs of its organizers. Rank abolitionists like Lundy supported it. The elder Joseph Gales, editor and founder of the Raleigh (North Carolina) *Register,* ardently advocated the colonization of free negroes in Liberia. As a Unionist and emancipationist he believed that each state only had the right to emancipate its slaves. His son, Joseph Gales, and his son-in-law, William W. Seaton, editors of the *National Intelligencer* until the evil days of the Civil War, believed until they were disillusioned late in their careers that the slaveholders would gladly rid themselves of their slaves, if that were possible.[2]

The Blairs came to hold similar views to those of the colonizationists. In the Blair papers is a manuscript copy of a memorial which belonged to Montgomery, drawn up and submitted presumably to friends in Pennsylvania to be by them introduced and passed in their state legislature and then presented to Congress begging for its support of colonization. "Thomas Jefferson," it

[2] Seaton, *Biography,* 265-66. Seaton was once Vice-President of the Colonization Society.

declares, "the wisest and most benevolent of our Statesmen has recorded the opinion that nature habit & opinion have drawn such indelible lines of distinction between the two races . . . that equally free they cannot live under the same Government and how the time would come when in some country & climate friendly to human life it would be necessary to provide homes where our free colored population might be established under our patronage & protection as a separate free & independent people."

The Blairs urged their friends to agitate the movement in New England and throughout the Northwest. Their foresight was keen enough to divine serious trouble ahead if the Republicans did win in 1860. They were natural-born agitators, but, being lovers of the Union, they dreaded the consequences of their agitations, two decades old, now about to be brought to full fruition. The two sons, consequently, begged Senator Doolittle to use his persuasive powers on the governors of the northwestern states. They wanted Governors Randall of Wisconsin, Dennison of Ohio, and Kirkwood of Iowa, to make concerted efforts to present the subject of colonization to their respective legislatures and peoples. To make the issue a prominent one was the great point. They believed that a general agitation of it would cause the slaveholders to quail under its force. "If our Northern Governors," wrote Montgomery Blair to Doolittle, "would come up boldly to the work and say that the policy of casting out free negroes from the Slave States upon the Northern States demands the action of General Government to provide suitable passes for such of them as wish to go where their manhood would have the stimulant of high objects attainable to develop it, it would rally the North, as one man, to our ranks. It would do more, too, than ten thousand speeches to define accurately our objects and disabuse the minds of the great body of the Southern people of the issues South, that the Republicans wish to set negroes free among them to be their equals and consequently their rulers when they are numerous." [3]

The Blairs labored under the mistaken view that the Republican party could be made as strong in the South as in the North if the slaveholders were convinced that the North demanded only

[3] M. Blair to Doolittle, Nov. 11, 1859. Pub. in the *Mo. Hist. Rev.*, XI, 136.

the disposal of free negroes and the non-extension of slavery. The fathers of the Constitution, they believed, had thought the time would come when the National Government would give the states a chance to rid themselves of slavery, and "the time has come, if ever," wrote Montgomery Blair, "when this enabling act must be adopted."

Doolittle became a co-worker with the Blairs in their cause. His mild voice and soft blue eyes did not tell how much determination he possessed. He believed devoutly that God guided him and elected him to oppose the expansion of slave interests. In the providence of God, he said, the South would be compelled to yield. Thus religiously imbued with his exalted ideas, he became an ardent and devoted emancipationist.[4] In 1859 he spoke in Wisconsin and Iowa and wrote for the cause of colonization. He made a fruitless effort to convince John Bell of Tennessee of the feasibility of the plan.[5] The Blairs sent him their speeches and documents for distribution. Governor Kirkwood of Iowa who was urged on by Frank Blair, and who tried to get his legislature to make the move for colonization in the winter of 1859, received documents and the speeches which Blair made on colonization in Congress, in Boston, and in St. Paul. He went on a speaking tour in Iowa in favor of the cause of colonization. Blair hoped to arouse the masses to the support of his plan, and through them bring sufficient pressure to bear upon the politicians to force them to accept it. Seward, he said, would claim to be the originator of it, just as he did about the "irrepressible conflict," as soon as it became a popular issue.[6]

A number of the St. Louisans accepted the utopian dream of deportation and colonization of freedmen. During the Civil War Lincoln accepted it as a probable solution, and the Blairs did not give up the idea until after 1868. Frank, being the best orator in the family, appeared to the public to be the most militant. He spoke in behalf of his plan in various parts of the United States during the year 1859. He appeared before the cultured Bostonians, the Ohioans, the Iowans, and the rough frontiersmen on the

[4] Doolittle MSS. To Mrs. Doolittle, Dec. 6, 1857; and May 15, 1858.
[5] *Am. Hist. Mag.*, IX, 275-76.
[6] *Ibid.*, F. Blair to Doolittle, Nov. 3, 1859; D. E. Clark, *Samuel Jordan Kirkwood* (Iowa City, 1917), 145.

plains of Minnesota; he was in Missouri and in New Hampshire where he helped the Republicans to carry their state.[7] His greatest speech was before the Mercantile Library Association of Boston on January 26, 1859.

In his Bostonian audience were the distinguished Ralph Waldo Emerson and Governor Nathaniel P. Banks. Old and young Republicans had come to hear "Frank Blair" of Missouri. He disclaimed at the beginning any title to scholarship and oratory such as Bostonians were accustomed to hear. He could, he said, only gratify them with the novelty of a lecture by a backwoodsman, one "born and bred among the hunters of Kentucky," one who had attained manhood in Missouri still the Far West, and had finished his education as a companion of the rangers of the Rocky Mountains.[8]

His address was nearly two hours in length. His style varied from essay to oratory. At times he was practical, logical, and at other times he played in the realms of theory and imagination. The destiny of the white, black, and red races on this continent was considered. For an hour he talked on the past and future of the American Indian. He concluded that amalgamation between the red and white races was impracticable. The superiority of the whites would ultimately lead to the withdrawal of the remaining Indian tribes to Mexico where they might live with their brothers. This continent was destined to be bound with bands of steel. With the development of railroads would come the destruction of Indian power and glory and the development of states where now the aborigines roamed the plains.

Several reasons existed for the necessity of a railroad running west from St. Louis. The Orient that produced spices, teas, and silks, and where golden sands yielded their precious metal, beckoned to our merchants. The potential riches of that commerce were incalculable. California and Oregon needed the improved transportation which the East could provide. What capitalists were abler than the enterprising Bostonians? "Of all the regions adapted to foster the energies, intellectual and physical, of a heroic

[7] Doolittle MSS., *passim;* James O. Lyford, *Life of Edward Rollins, A Political Biography* (Boston, 1906), 96.

[8] F. P. Blair, Jr., *The Destiny of the Races of this Continent* (Washington, 1859). Pamphlet.

race of freemen, the world has none equal to that which rises from the valley of the Mississippi along the temperate central altitudes of this continent, ascends the Rocky Mountains, where Pike's Peak commands its views, and stands as the standard-bearer, beckoning the nation—which descends again, and forms the great basin of the continent, the western rim—the Sierra Nevada—making the border heights, from which it looks down on California and the Pacific Ocean." Now the descendants of the Pilgrims, who had trod the trackless forests, blazing the trail to homes wherein freedom of conscience and mind might abide, sailed their ships on every ocean; they had pressed on to Sacramento and Monterey driving before them sterile Spanish civilization; they were now farming the fertile plains of Kansas and Iowa and pouring into the hill regions at the foot of Pike's Peak. Let there be a cordon of states bound by railroads built by the sons of our Pilgrim fathers in fulfillment of the prophecies of the immortal explorers who had traversed the plains and passes at the cost of life and treasure. The means of development of these potential states, he said, was the most important of all political questions which confronted the friends of the Union. Moreover, the advantages of a highway to Cathay by which men could go on the wings of steam, rolling on bands of steel or sailing on water, could be realized only as America out-distanced Europe in the capture of Oriental commerce.

His ideas on slavery were similar to those expressed in his speeches in Congress on January 14 and February 2, 1858. He lauded the action of the tender-hearted Czar Alexander II of the Russias who set free in 1861 thousands of serfs on the lands of the royal family. He cited the sad spectacle of Turkey, once all-conquering, now exhibiting in her decay how the wrongs inflicted on inferior races are avenged by vices which destroy the conquerors. What was ahead of America? He answered: "Slavery in our country has taken its worst form, and will be followed by the worst results, if not speedily removed. . . . Our Supreme Court has decided that the negro has nothing of that 'Divinity that stirs within us,' which can save him here or hereafter. This monstrous doctrine, interpolated into our Constitution, is a last resort to render Slavery compatible with the principles of our

free government. . . . To what grade must the population of the slaveholding States be reduced, if that class which performs the labor and creates the wealth of the State is stripped of the attributes of man, and ceases to have any rights? Will not such degradation attach in time to all who are constrained to labor in the service of another, no matter of what class, or how compelled?" The fate of white and black laborers will be the same; they cannot exist prosperously together. This was proved by the facts compiled in the census of 1850. Virginia once surpassed New York in wealth and population. What had caused her to fall behind with depleted soil and poverty? The answer, according to the figures in the census abstract, was slavery. Capable but financially poor whites had migrated to the Northwest where free labor and free lands offered inducements to all our ambitious citizens. To live in Virginia is to "see and feel the ruin around them in the poverty and despair of their unemployed countrymen."

The South, he said, wanted to recover its prestige in power and wealth by the annexation of Cuba or Mexico. Republicans, however, could see in slavery no blessing to force upon either of those areas by a buccaneering Democracy. "It is against the genius of our Republic, born of Freedom and Toleration, to provoke by flagrant wrong, and especially by a wrong having a still greater one for its purpose, the establishment of Slavery in a neighboring Republic. . . ." The remedy which the South should adopt for its problem of slavery was freedom. It alone could set the two incongruous races free. As long as slavery exists it is "a blot on the fair prospect of our country. The institution which grows up out" of the servitude of the African race is "a poisonous excrescence, which sucks the vitality out of those to whom it clings."

He believed that the colonization of the emancipated slaves could be accomplished only by the joint action of the state and federal governments. Expenses must be borne by the governments concerned. Financial aid should be provided for the transported migrants to some South or Central American colony until they were domiciled. The negro state would be properly a dependency of the United States and protected by our flag. Freedmen's families should be induced to migrate in a way similar to

that used to encourage frontiersmen to go westward. Force must not be used. Thus encouraged they would form a state which would contribute to our pride and glory, to our wealth and strength. We should then fulfill our duty toward the development of backward races—"the true mission of a superior and enlightened race."

On February 8, the speaker, accompanied by Emerson, Governor Banks, Judge Russell, and other eminent gentlemen, cruised down Boston Bay to view the forts and the wreck of the ship *Roebuck*. His début in New England had become history. The influence of his speech measured in terms of accomplishment for colonization was nil; politically, it was a step toward making the name of Frank Blair favorably known to New England—another name to conjure with in case the vice-presidency were in question.

By November 29, 1859, he was declaring before an audience in Cincinnati, Ohio, that the time had come to begin an effective movement to emancipate our slaves and colonize them in a state to be bought of decadent Spain. Other nations which had embraced slavery, he said, had perished, and already our Union was in danger of being rent asunder because of that accursed institution. He was now more impetuous, bold, and demanding in his speech than he had been in New York, or in other speeches elsewhere. Facing a people who sympathized with the South he told them of the immorality and the dangers of slavery to free labor, cities, and the race. He was in earnest, and pleading with the soul of a crusader.[9]

His speeches have the earmarks of revision by his father and brother.[10] The Blairs continued to advocate in vain the doctrines set forth in them. Neither colonization nor compromise was acceptable to either the North or South. They were soon caught in the whirl of politics in the election of 1860. After that, war was too near to allow their conservative program to interfere in its progress.

Meantime the country was startled and amazed at the daring attack on Harper's Ferry by John Brown. His purpose was to

[9] *Speeches of F. P. Blair,* in State Hist. Soc. of Mo.
[10] See also Blair MSS, F. P. Blair, Jr., to M. Blair, Oct. 15, 1859.

make war on slavery. Like a fanatical prophet and patriarch he was obsessed with the one idea that God had chosen him as an instrument to free the enslaved. His escapades at Ossawatomie, Kansas, and in Missouri were notorious among his contemporaries. His attempt to free the slaves from their shackles by striking at the heart of slavedom—in old Virginia—proved abortive, as any sane man must have known that it would. He with his band was captured by force of arms after blood had been shed, he severely wounded more than once, and two of his sons had been killed. He was peremptorily tried and condemned to suffer death on the scaffold. He was given a farcical trial at Charlestown, Virginia, by an enraged and determined people seeking vengeance upon a madman.

Robbed of his money by his captors, he was forced to rely upon gifts from his Northern sympathizers and from friends of his family to defray necessary expenses during his imprisonment and trial. His counsel at first comprised two able Virginians appointed by the court to defend him. In them he justly had no confidence, and they gladly resigned their task, against the wishes of the state prosecutor, to a young lawyer of Athol, Massachusetts,[11] a beardless youth employed to act as a spy in the case by J. W. LeBarnes, of Boston. The trial began on Thursday morning, October 27, 1859, about one week after Brown was captured. Hoyt arrived in Charlestown on the night of October 27, reported to the court the next morning, and begged for a delay, which was granted. Brown had written to Judge Daniel Tilden of Cleveland, Ohio, and to Hon. Thomas Russell of Boston, asking them to appear as his counsel. In answer to his request Judge Tilden sent the able Hiram Griswold, of Cleveland, to appear for him. Meanwhile John A. Andrew, who had been favorably impressed by Brown, wrote to Montgomery Blair, either to go himself or to send some one to Charlestown to defend Brown, promising to raise the money to pay an able lawyer. Russell arrived in person on November 2, but Blair could not get away to go to Charlestown and sent Samuel Chilton, of Washington, an eminent Virginian, who arrived on the 29th. Both Chilton and Gris-

[11] Hill Peebles Wilson, *John Brown, Soldier of Fortune, A Critique* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1913), 368.

wold asked for a delay of a few hours during which time they might familiarize themselves with their case, but the inexorable Judge Parker refused their request. The court was nearing the end of its term and the jurors, he said, were entitled to a speedy termination of the trial. Blair thought a plea of insanity on the part of Brown's counsel would be the proper action and advised the summoning of friends of the accused to prove that a tendency to insanity existed in the Brown family. Brown denied that he was insane and Governor Henry A. Wise said he was undoubtedly sane. The trial went on.

Blair advised that the most active friends of abolition absent themselves from the country and refuse to go to Charlestown as witnesses in order to avoid mob violence. Dr. Samuel G. Howe and Frederick Douglas immediately left for foreign countries and others suddenly had pressing business in Kansas, or in the West. Frank Blair worried about the welfare of Montgomery and the possible effects which the raid might have on border state politics. On October 20 he wrote to him about "that insane business of old John Brown at Harpers Ferry. . . . I fear it will recoil on us as a party in the border states." [12]

Charged with treason to the commonwealth, murder, and conspiracy with slaves, his conviction by a frenzied people was a foregone conclusion. The Blairs at Washington counseled caution and reason. They feared Senator "Mason and Company" were bound to stir up trouble for the Union. They told the nervous and enthusiastic Hoyt, who bitterly hated the South, that disunion must be avoided while the Republicans worked for a victory in 1860. Hoyt confessed to a friend that their plan for the Republican party was a "most persuasive and inspiring thing. . . . I think that Mr. Blair, senior, is a man who understands the people of the South better than we at the North, and his emancipation theory is great!" On December 2 Brown met death like a man. He became a hero in the eyes of the North; he remained a diabolical villain in the eyes of the South. State rights, the "peculiar institution," and vengeance were respectively vindicated, defended, and taken, but the prophets and poets made the soul of John Brown go marching on while his body lay moldering in his grave.

[12] Blair MSS.

CHAPTER XXVI

Election of 1860

At once there rose so wild a yell
Within that dark and narrow dell;
As all the fiends from heaven that fell
Had pealed the banner cry of hell.

I

The Jeffersonian Democracy disappeared in the Jacksonian revolt after twenty-eight years of public leadership. By 1860 the party once known as the Jacksonian Democracy deserved a humiliating defeat. The Republican crusaders of six years of party battles were anxious to administer that defeat in the election of 1860 and face the consequences. Each debatable issue during the last decade had added strength to their party. Between 1856 and 1860 men were forced either to become Republicans or support an effete Democracy controlled by a militant corporal's guard which demanded the right to extend slavery. Letters similar to that of Frank Blair to Rollins of November 24, 1856, were passing from man to man. He wrote as follows: [1]

Dear Rollins

I received your letter a few days ago. I like your spunk— I like also your plain way of talking to me and to show you that I do like it, I shall be equally plain & frank in return. Altho' both of [us] are defeated in our hopes, yet I believe we are both nearer to success than we thought ourselves to be a short time ago. We are nearer to victory because we have heretofore been travelling the wrong road and that has been stopped, barred up & now if we have the sense we can find the right one & by travelling it we will come out victorious, but first we must be convinced that we have been going wrong and not continue the struggle in that direction. Are you convinced that Know Nothingism is the d—dest folly of the age? Are you ready to let it go to the devil & give it a kick to help it along? I am convinced that some things that I have been working for, are infernal *Humbugs* and one of them the father of Humbugs (*not the father in law by any*

[1] Rollins MSS.

means)— I am content to do the best we can in the next Legislature with your folly & my humbug and upon the plan you suggest. Let us make the most of them but for Gods sake, let us devise some rational plan upon which we can unite in favor of what we have both long desired— You know that there are but two parties in this country and whilst we have both been convinced that one of them was right & the other all wrong, we with ten thousand others of the same sentiments have calmly permitted prejudice to be heaped upon the party we felt to be right and thus indirectly aided the side to which we were opposed— I will do this thing no longer— I ceased doing it some time ago & the longer you continue to do it, the worse it will be for us all. We must fall on some plan of uniting such men as Rollins & Blair Broadhead & Brown, Fagg and J. M. Richardson—Moss & A. P. Richardson—Smith & [?], Jim Lindley & Stephenson, Perryman & Jim Lindsay and a hundred other couples I could name but you will know without my naming them, upon some open fair & square platform of opposition to these infernal disunionists and we must take the field & fight for victory— Can't we organize something this winter at Jefferson on this idea—have a head committee and committees in every county and be ready with a candidate for every office in the state at the next election— We might begin by a fusion in the Legislature this very winter & if defeated now we can by union, energy and one half the perseverance displayed by those damned nullifiers carry the state in the next election— What do you say? We might as well get as many leading men of the two old parties together at Jefferson this winter & try it, try if we can't agree upon something, as to fold our arms and be shot down & slaughtered by the old line Whig & rotten fusion— What do you say? Will you write to the men I have mentioned of your stripe & as many more as you can think of, to come to Jefferson, whilst I write to the men of my side to do the same for the purpose of consultation and action. I saw old George Smith for a moment—expected to have seen him for a long talk but my family was sick & I did not go to town & see him, but of course he is right. If we go into anything, it must be something that is open & above board, it must be upon some public measure which will justify the step from its own intrinsic importance & then we must give our whole time to the thing & open the canvas at once. Every speaker must take the stump, every writer take to the newspapers & those who can do neither must go on the working committees & correspond all over the state— If this is done we can carry the state and if we dont—*we know who is going to carry the United States four years hence. And knowing that we know who can wield that political power and provide for those of our friends who need this kind of care.* I respond thus frankly to your letter & let you know what I intend to do, by asking you to unite in doing it. I intend something of the kind whether you agree

with me or not & you will have no alternative but to do this, do nothing or join the Buchaneers—give my best regards to Mrs. Rollins and all the little Rollins and all the people who are like Rollins in his way of thinking. . . .

The Blairs never lost courage nor their faith in the future during that memorable decade. They believed that Frank as the heir of Old Hickory and Old Bullion would eventually reach the White House. That aim in the background helped to determine certain of their policies while they labored earnestly and zealously for their new party and the Union. It must be borne in mind that they were border-states men who understood both North and South, men of great courage and fidelity to an ideal. Parties to them were mere instruments to attain an end. Consequently Frank could write to Rollins whom he expected to help make President: "For instance—I did not choose to bring certain defeat on myself by going for Frémont, nor did I bar my own road for a future by going for Buchanan" in 1856.[2]

They took defeat with equanimity even though it might mortify and keenly disappoint them. This was likewise true with them when their friends met defeat. "We will beat them in 1860," said the elder Blair after the election of 1856. And after Rollins was defeated for governor of Missouri by the able but eccentric bachelor, R. M. Stewart, in a hotly contested special election in 1857, Frank wrote to him:[3]

I propose to you that you shall represent the 2nd Congressional District in Congress and succeed Jim Green in the Senate— Our friends go for this programme to the last man— I know you would like to put your foot in Jim Green's neck altho' you once told me you were not ambitious— I say to you that you must now appear in Congress and assume there that commanding position which your talents entitle you to hold and which your duty to the country demands that you should take in the crisis which is approaching and which you know will be the most severe to which this govt—has ever been exposed. We must have men in Congress who will not abet the disunion schemes of the Democrats by professing their sentiments[.] Such men as Anderson & Woodson must give way to Rollins and George R. Smith. I talked with George about our programme. You must be in Jefferson City with Broadhead and all of the most reliable men on both sides to concert our future policy. We must make con-

[2] Rollins MSS. Feb. 28, 1857. [3] Rollins MSS. Sept. 9, 1857.

cessions on both sides for the sake of a perfect Union against the Nullifiers. . . . We must work with actual tangible measures which we can all approve and which our Nullifiers will be compelled to oppose but against their judgment and inclination, but compelled to oppose on account of the attitude of the administration at Washington.

Then came the elections of 1858 of which there has been mention. The panic of 1857 contributed to the tension between the rival sections. The endorsement of Hinton Helper's *Impending Crisis,* that terrible arraignment of slavery, by Frank Blair and about sixty other prominent Republicans and the circularization of it as a campaign document added much to the enmity between North and South. All Southern Congressmen proscribed it, and with the aid of a few others they defeated John Sherman for the Speakership of the House of Representatives in February, 1860, because he had endorsed it. Cotton exports and prices continued to soar thereby converting the South to the theory that cotton was the king of the markets. Congressmen from the South showed unmistakable signs that they would brook no further restrictions on slavery. They with the support of the President proposed the purchase of Cuba. The President urged that it be done and furthermore proposed that northern Mexico be made a protectorate of the United States. Alexander Stephens was outspoken in his endorsement of William Walker's filibustering expedition in Nicaragua. There was a movement of considerable importance in the South to reopen the African slave trade. Good field slaves were worth from about $1,500 to $2,000 a head in 1859. Stephen A. Douglas asserted that about 15,000 slaves were smuggled into the United States in 1859.

Many measures supported by the North were defeated for sectional reasons when they appeared in Congress. The Homestead bill suffered defeat because the South did not want to allow more territory to be formed into free states. The Pacific railroad bill failed of passage because the South feared the road would lie without the Southern confederacy then in contemplation. Debates over the John Brown raid were especially bitter. Frank Blair was seated instead of Barret on a strictly partisan count after unnecessarily sharp language had been used during the long debates. "As the sectional strife grew more bitter, the tone of the debates grew

more menacing: expostulation and protest stiffened into the demand of the ultimatum. Concession was looked on askance as incipient treason to the section. The press was unbridled in its language of vituperation. Sheets like the Richmond *Enquirer* and *De Bow's Review* spoke of the Northerners as if they were already the inhabitants of a hostile foreign country, calling them the 'worst bigots on earth' and 'the meanest of tyrants, who had never had the slightest conception of what constitutes true liberty.' "

The Republicans meanwhile pushed their advantages wherever possible. The press denounced the Southern Democracy in unmeasured terms. Men were in revolt and becoming acquainted with each other. The Whigs, Free-Soil Democrats, Americans, and Republicans leagued together in common opposition. In Missouri, Frank Blair urged Broadhead to run for the Supreme Court in the expectation of carrying the vote of the Free-Soilers and Americans. As for the Germans he wrote to Broadhead "I will have the Anzeiger declare for you in time." [4]

He persuaded his associates during the winter of 1860-61 to cast off the old name of their party, namely, the "Free Democratic Party," and adopt the one word "Republican." His party was then identified with the national party. He planned to further strengthen his ticket by having the popular, very able, and well-known Rollins run for governor. He wanted to use the name and influence of Edward Bates to carry the Whig vote, and consequently, urged him as the favorite son for the presidency on the Republican ticket. Free from procrastination, he begged Rollins to insist on an early state convention to perfect an organization. In his explanation to Rollins who was inclined to wait he wrote:

> . . . It is necessary that Mr. Bates should be brought before the country by the united opposition of Missouri at an early day & give him an opportunity (which he has once thrown away) of making an exposition of his views which will recommend him to the Republican nomination. This matter will not bear much longer delay— The declaration made in the news must be made over his own signature, and if he should fail to obtain the nomination if the canvass goes forward now, men will commit themselves to you & the ticket framed

[4] Broadhead MSS., June 27, 1859. The *Anzeiger,* edited by Dr. Charles L. Bernays, was an important German newspaper in St. Louis.

at Jefferson in the hope & expectation of his nomination, who will not afterwards recede from their position— This is a matter well worthy of being considered, for as a matter of course we cannot count certainly upon his nomination & we must not lay down our arms in any event, but fight for victory under any & all circumstances. I consider that you are almost as strong as Bates but we must have his as well as your strength[.] I should like to have a conversation upon this whole subject with you before I leave for Washington. . . . It is important also that our free soil people should be represented on the ticket, as well for your success as for Bates— It is absolutely essential also that we should be assured [agreed?] on the slavery question and upon all questions in regard to which the opposition disagree among themselves and attack the democracy upon these points in which they are obnoxious to us all alike. We should say boldly that we do disagree upon some questions but that we unite in the patriotic effort to overthrow the most corrupt party that ever dominated in this country. . . .

Outside Missouri he helped Republican candidates in their campaigns and pleaded for the adoption of his plan for colonization. He endeavored to ruin the chance of Douglas by flaying him with vitriolic language in every political speech. With piles of Helper's *Impending Crisis* on every newspaper-stand and in bookstores, with disturbed merchants who found their names on the Southern black lists, and with the Union-savers holding meetings throughout the North, there was excellent opportunity for popular speakers to influence strangely the excited anti-slavery people and especially to convince them of the virtues of Republicanism. Frank was a popular orator of great ability. His bold, frank manner made him in demand over the entire North. Of one among many of his speeches made in 1859 he wrote to Montgomery that: [5]

I am very glad you & my father liked the St. Paul speech. As delivered it was two hours & a half in length and had many points which were left out in the report— The best points are retained however, & the language condensed & I expect it all the better for it altho it was well liked— The speech I made in St. Anthony was the best I delivered and was applauded very much—the audience rising once or twice in the midst of it & giving three lusty cheers & at the end they gave nine cheers for Frank Blair— The fact is that in high times of politi-

[5] Blair MSS. Oct. 20, 1859.

cal excitement people are easy to please. I told the old man [F. B. Blair] that I intended to make speeches in Minnesota that would be remembered but I didn't expect to succeed so well. I received a letter from Lincoln of Illinois in which he complimented me highly. I have no doubt Trumbull liked it also, they both hate Douglas like the devil & I expect they like the best that part you most object to— I must say I hate the little dirty dog as bad as they do & wanted to show my contempt for him— It is all a mistake to suppose he can dislike me any more than he did before[.] His own meanness to me makes him hate me as bad as he knows how & I propose to make him afraid of me. He will not be as likely to show his malice now as he was before. Father and I talked it over when I was at Silver Spring and he agreed with me that I ought to give him a good dressing and I even told him of the very quotation about the "toad" that I intended to pitch to him. . . . The elections in the North West this fall I think have destroyed all the chances the little rascal ever had—and my impression now is that he is scarcely worth notice. He was drunk half the time he was in Chicago & certainly drunk when he spoke at Wooster, Ohio—and with the decline of his hopes he will sink into a beast & vanish from public view— I do not propose to have anything more to say about him, his race is about run.

I am at work on a lecture for Cincinnati and think I can probably make it do— You and the old man must cut it severely where you think it deserves it and not come on me after the event as he is now doing when I told him before hand that I intended to give "hops" to the "toad."

While in Minnesota he made the chance acquaintance of Carl Schurz, a man who was to cross and recross his path during the remainder of his life. Schurz was at the time speaking for the Republicans in Wisconsin and Minnesota. While lost on his way to Lexington, Minnesota, he spied a buggy with two men in it coming from the opposite direction. Coming closer one of them hailed him with "Hello, stranger! Please stop a moment!" Schurz ordered his driver to pull up. A man jumped from the buggy and saluting him, said: "I wonder whether you are not Mr. Carl Schurz?" "Yes, that is my name," replied Schurz. "I am Frank Blair from St. Louis, Missouri," said the stranger. Blair's name was familiar to Schurz as that of the bravest anti-slavery man in a slave state. After a few words of greeting Blair said, "Let us sit down in the grass and have some lunch. I have a bottle of claret, and some sandwiches, enough for both of us." And, so in

that way these two greatest of Western anti-slavery orators met. It was an "exceedingly pleasant" meeting, wrote Schurz long afterwards. "We laughed much about the fun of this wild campaign and rejoiced together in the prospects of our cause." "This was the way in which I made the acquaintance of the famous Frank Blair, one of the most gallant and successful anti-slavery leaders in the South." [6]

At home his affairs were not so pleasant. "I found everything here in confusion on my return," he wrote to Montgomery [7] some time after he had returned from Washington, D. C. The anti-slavery factions were ready to give up the spring elections in despair and were fighting among themselves like cats and dogs. "I was compelled to devote myself night & day to the task of infusing confidence into the leaders and making reconciliation among them— I don't know how I should have succeeded but for the blunders of our enemies who calculating on our difficulties, have gone forward & nominated tickets which we can overthrow to a certainty— I had meetings called in the different [wards] and made speeches and thus raised confidence and the prospect now is that we shall have an easy victory [in April]— Gratz Brown is a very bad manager and whenever I go away gets things into confusion— He assumes the dictator and makes everybody mad with him. I have been compelled to talk plainly to him & hurt his feelings a little but the case was one of necessity and I could not help it— We must arrange to get him out of the way and set up another editor [of the *Democrat*]— His young wife has occupied his time too much and makes him inefficient instead of inspiring him with the ambition to push ahead." [8]

While thus employed in an almost superhuman task of forming a Republican party in Missouri to meet the crisis which he believed to be approaching rapidly, he had the misfortune of being driven almost into bankruptcy by the failure of Carey Gratz, a relative, for whom he stood as heavy security.[9] He staggered beneath his heavy financial obligations until late in 1860 at which time his father was forced to come to his rescue. His father had

[6] Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (3 vols., New York, 1907), II, 147.
[7] Blair MSS. Mar. 17, 1859. [8] *Ibid.* Mar. 17, 1859.
[9] *Ibid.* F. P. Blair, Jr., to M. Blair, June 3, 1859.

$48,000 invested in St. Louis in good securities and in safe loans on property.[10] Franklin A. Dick, a prominent St. Louis lawyer, and attorney for Frank and his father, wrote on December 14, 1860, to the elder Blair, that Frank's affairs were such that he could not meet his obligations in any way other than by allowing the mortgagors to take his property. One Castello, a sheriff, had defaulted and absconded since Carey Gratz and Company and Gratz and Shelby had failed, leaving Frank liable for $5,000 to $10,000 as his bondsman. The effects of the panic of 1857 had been severe on St. Louis, then a Western boom-city. Frank had over-reached himself in investments in real estate. But Dick said his property was well worth more than the loans against it.

He proposed to have the father sell sufficient of his securities, all of which bore ten per cent interest, and meet Frank's immediate payments as they fell due. Frank promised to assign the rents derived from his stores and house, which amounted to $3,200 annually, and to make new deeds of trust to his father.

He already owed his father $15,000 which made a total indebtedness of $100,000. He placed all his property in trust with his father except one source of income of $1,200. His father saved him from financial ruin, but he labored under this terrific strain during the Civil War only to see his property slip from him piece by piece. If ever man needed a victory at the polls, that man was Frank Blair in 1860. Many men less enamored with politics would have devoted themselves to the practice of law, especially those who could have commanded the fees that he did for his services. His love for his country and the lure of office led him on to financial ruin.

2

The Blairs have been ridiculed and condemned for their support of Edward Bates for the nomination by the Republicans in the convention at Chicago in 1860. Their side of the Bates movement has not been explained. There can be no doubt of their honesty and sincerity of purpose which was to preserve the Union and assist the Republican party in Missouri. There is evidence of their first purpose in a letter of the elder Blair, who wrote on

[10] Blair MSS. F. A. Dick to F. P. Blair, Sr., Oct. 31, Nov. 1, 1860.

February 16, 1860, to Crittenden begging him to make a speech in the Senate in which he would lay down a broad platform upon which the anti-slavery men could unite. He believed the Republicans would not fail to choose a man from a slave state to head their ticket.[11] He considered either Crittenden or Bates available. The political acumen of Montgomery, the popularity of Frank, and the influence of their father made them a formidable trio. Added to their weight were able men like Rollins, Broadhead, Doolittle and Greeley. I. Washburn, junior, of Maine, agreed with J. S. Pike, associate editor of the New York *Tribune,* that there was "a deep, widely extended and formidable movement to nominate Bates, or some one like him." [12]

Frank insisted in 1859 that the border state opposition to the Democracy could be united only with Bates at the head of the Republican party.[13] Bates was a conservative Whig whose views on slavery, says a St. Louisan writing for the New York *Tribune* (November 22, 1859), under the title of "Spectator," were theoretically and practically opposed to slavery—"however his views have been equivocal and he has not yet taken a leading part in the Free Labor struggle in Missouri." He had left that duty to the gallant Frank Blair who thus far had fought and won.

There were two men in Missouri whose support Frank believed to be necessary to unite the Whigs, Know-nothings, and Free-Soilers under the Republican banner. They were Rollins and Broadhead. He wanted Rollins to run for governor of Missouri and he intended that Broadhead, who was powerful in St. Louis politics, should run for Congress. Broadhead's views on the candidacy of Bates and politics in general were influential with Frank. Light is thrown on the Blairs-for-Bates movement by a letter of Broadhead in which he writes unreservedly to a friend thus: [14]

> . . . Can the shattered and diminished forces of the Americans & Whigs combined—shattered by defeat and diminished by desertion hope alone to accomplish the desired result? When then can we look for auxiliaries? I might rather ask where else can we look than to the

[11] Coleman, *Crittenden,* II, 186-87.
[12] James S. Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War* (New York, 1879), 483. Letter of Washburn to J. S. Pike, Jan. 31, 1860.
[13] Blair MSS. F. P. Blair, Jr., to M. Blair, Oct. 15, 1859.
[14] Broadhead MSS. Broadhead to Hon. (name illegible), Dec. 6, 1859.

conservative faction of the Republican party? This I suppose you are willing to admit—and to say further that even should the blackest of the Black Republican party choose to vote for our distinguished better citizen Edward Bates for the Presidency—that you will still support him— He is here amongst us—you know him— You know his purity —his patriotism his ability—and you know further that he would not swerve from his duty at the bidding of any party—although you may not agree with him in all his political sentiments—you know he is not tinctured with Northern or Southern fanaticism—and if you know him as well as I do you may know also that no force of circumstances either prosperous or adverse can make him other than he is and has been a National Union loving Statesman——

Rollins was equally emphatic in his demands that Bates be supported for the Republican nomination.[15] He kept an extensive correspondence outside Missouri in behalf of Bates. "I am for a *square* fight; let the issue come, we have not provoked it; we have endeavored to avoid it, in this we have failed; and now . . . let it be freedom or slavery! And this will be the issue this year, in spite of anything which you or I may do or say; and in spite of what all other Whigs & Americans may do or say. And this being the case, I feel as deeply as any man can feel, the importance of having Mr. Bates as the candidate to lead the van of Freedom, for we know that as President he would do what is right; he would steer the vessel safely between Scylla & Charabidis [sic]— Northern fanaticism on the one hand and Southern treason and secession on the other. Of one thing you may rest assured, the Republicans will never take Mr. Bates or any other man, who will not consent to place himself *squarely* upon their platform and to accept without qualifications the nomination of their convention. This I think Mr. Bates could do, without any compromise of his honor or his consistency as a gentleman, a patriot and a statesman; for the truth is, as you remark, the Republicans have greatly moderated their views; in fact they differ in no essential particular on the subject of slavery, from the Whigs."

He was opposed to a third party, if Bates were not nominated on the Republican ticket. He voted for Frémont in 1856, and now he preferred "Seward, Chase, Banks, in short the Republican

[15] Broadhead MSS. Rollins to Broadhead, Feb. 1, 1860.

candidate" whoever he might be who would fight any man put forth by "the slave-democracy—the Pirates and Fillibusters" who had been "unscrupulous in the use of the Nigger question." And "if *because* they are at last defeated at their own game, and attempt *further* to tear down the Government, let us see that they meet a traitor's doom, and hang them like dogs, by the roadside! What say you? Still we must be prudent; let us avoid violence and collision if we can—let us continue to work for 'Uncle Edward.' With him as one of the *two* Presidential candidates, I believe we may carry Missouri. . . ."[16] Two weeks later he assured Broadhead that according to letters from over the country the Bates boom was growing.

The Blairs could hardly be expected to support Seward for the nomination. They opposed him because he was not an "available" candidate in the border states. The elder Blair would have supported Crittenden had the Senator adopted the principles which Frank Blair advocated in Missouri. He sent copies of his son's speeches to Crittenden and begged him to lay down in a speech a broad platform for a Union party. He was sure the Republicans would not nominate a man whom the South would consider dangerous to the existence of slavery. "If you should not be *selected,*" he wrote, "I am sure it will at least be one with whom you can cordially unite in giving direction to the government." The South, he said, was determined upon the dissolution of the Union.[17] Crittenden leaned toward Douglas, however, and believed that Bates would be the Black Republican nominee if Douglas succeeded in obtaining the nomination at Charleston. The Blairs were friendly with Greeley who, now in opposition to Weed and Seward, threw the powerful support of his paper to Bates who, he believed, would deprive of force any charge that the Republicans were sectional if he headed their party. On February 3 Greeley confidentially wrote to Colfax that Dayton should be their man if Bates could not be nominated. Greeley thought Lincoln was clearly the man for Vice President, but he believed it would be inadvisable to nominate two old Whigs.[18] The views of the elder Blair were further set forth in his letter to

[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Coleman, *Crittenden,* 186. F. P. Blair, Sr., to Crittenden, Feb. 16, 1860.
[18] Greeley-Colfax MSS.

Van Buren who was then attempting to complete his memoirs.[19] "The ultra Republicans," he said, "on our northern borders from East to West, it seems admitted here incline to Seward's nomination— The middle men & middle states undoubtedly look to Bates as the safest man to prevent secession or to suppress it. This idea may render him the most available candidate, & as such the choice at Chicago— In my opinion he is preferable to Seward in every respect— I would take Wade of Ohio." He would have preferred a man like Van Buren whom he considered to be the "last of the Democrats." The country, he said to the sage of Kinderhook, had been "curst with what Benton called Hermophradites—and of all, old Buck has proved the worst *Lusus Naturæ*."

The Blairs were doughty warriors in politics, cunning, aggressive and unyielding when they believed themselves to be in the right. They now had numerous reasons why they should desire to square differences with personal enemies and the nullifiers. Their comeback since 1845 had been slow and trying while they waged war on the nullifiers and the old corrupt Democracy. Bates apparently would appeal to the Whigs, Free-Soilers, Know-nothings, and the Republicans if he ran on a strictly Republican platform. The border states would vote for him, and they with the North meant victory. He was a slaveholder, although a Free-Soiler, and his election would more nearly avert civil war than if Seward or Lincoln were elected. The heated debates and duels in Washington were daily evidence that human passions and sectional hatreds could easily be fanned into fratricidal strife. The workers engaged in the enlargement of the capitol building added to the general confusion. "It would astonish you now," wrote the elder Blair to Van Buren, on February 13, "to pass from one end of the capitol to the other— It is a sort of Babel— The two wings are now two Capitols— The old body with its rotunda is but a thoroughfare, & there is a constant stream of busy bodies pouring to & fro like the throngs up & down Broadway— Altogether, the rubbish from the alterations & the erection of the enormous spire from the top of the dome—& the wandering tribes of hurrying people give the look of chaos & anarchy mixed— You seem to look upon it from your picture frame in the Rotunda with great com-

[19] Van Buren MSS. Feb. 13, 1860.

posure— Tyler has the startled look of a mad actor. . . . Polk twirls his bobbed off deformed thumbs—& old Buck's distorted neck & eyes give him the appearance of an ogre. . . . Your picture attracts many & none with more pleasure." [20]

By February the hot-tempered Southerners had informed the Republicans that the election of a Republican President would be a signal for secession.

Some headway for Bates was made in Missouri by the "Opposition party" or Republican, or Unconditional Union party. On January 5, the German newspaper, the St. Charles *Demokrat,* came out for Bates; the *Zeitung* announced for him about a month later; about the end of January the Opposition in the state legislature endorsed him in caucus, and chose a state central committee; the Opposition called a state convention which endorsed him for the presidency on January 29; and the Republican convention in St. Louis, of March 10, instructed its delegates to vote for him at the Chicago National Republican Convention.

On the twelfth, the editors of the St. Louis *Democrat,* the *Anzeiger,* and nine others addressed a questionnaire to Bates as follows: [21]

"First—Are you opposed to the Extension of Slavery?

Second—Does the Constitution carry Slavery into the Territories, and as a subsidiary to this, what is the legal effect of the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case?

Fifth—Are you in favor of the construction of a Railroad from the Valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific ocean, under the auspices of the General Government?

Seventh—Are you in favor of the immediate admission of Kansas under the constitution adopted at Wyandotte?"

Bates replied, March 17, to the above questions in part as follows:

First—"I am opposed to the Extension of Slavery, and in my opinion the spirit and policy of the Government ought to be against its extension."

Second—"I answer no."

[20] Van Buren MSS.

[21] S. B. Laughlin, "Missouri Politics During the Civil War," in *Mo. Hist. Rev.,* XXXIII, ch. 1.

Fifth—"Yes, strongly."
Seventh—"I think that Kansas ought to be admitted without delay, leaving her like all the other states, the judge of her own constitution."

The Bates boom met serious opposition among the radical Republicans. Seward, Chase, Banks, Lincoln, and the whole galaxy of Republican stars owed nothing to Bates. Some of their objections to him were well founded. He was from Missouri, a trans-Mississippi state. He was conservative, a slaveholder, and an old man. Worst of all, he was opposed by the German press, which carried with it the powerful German vote outside his own state. He was warmly supported by the Germans of Missouri,[22] a fact which is explainable through the knowledge of Blair's powerful influence with them. An amusing estimate of him as a candidate is set forth by Fitz-Henry Warren, of Iowa, a friend of James S. Pike. He calls Bates a pre-Adamite and writes:[23]

. . . When I look at a bald head, I expect to find under its polished surface good sense. Horace [Greeley] is an exceptional case. I am glad you agree with me about Edward Bates. I have no doubt Blair is right about him [Bates]. He is with us in sentiment and sympathy. But, in the language of Daniel the Dark, "What is all this worth" for a President? For a church warden or a congregational deacon I should be for him, with both hands up. . . . For God's sake let us look to life and not to resurrection for our success in 60. I go in for electing; but why go into the bowels of Niggerdom for a candidate? If you can carry Missouri for Bates, you can carry Arkansas for him; and you can lift yourself up by the waistband daily for ten years before you can do either. The King of Terrors has a large work to do in Missouri before any Republican candidate can touch bottom there.

Frank was impatient with those who refused to accept Bates as the best candidate. He was irritated beyond measure by the action of Gratz Brown who headed the convention in St. Louis, but organized an opposition party to defeat Bates at Chicago. On April 7, he informed Rollins that he was disgusted with the "whole d—n pack of old Fogys & foolish Know Nothings in Missouri." But he had hopes.

[22] Koerner, *Memoirs*, II, 79.

[23] Pike, *op. cit.*, 484, 497.

I hope because I believe in the good sense of the Black Republican party and because I know that they can elect Bates and don't believe they have another *name* by which they can certainly be saved, but if they should turn out to have no other than the opposition party of Missouri they cannot find their way to h—ll an hour too soon. Seriously, Jim, I haven't got over the postponement of the opposition convention last December in Missouri. I have letters from California telling that if Bates had been re-nominated then by Missouri he would have received a nomination by acclamation from California. As it is half of the Delegates are for Seward & the other half mixed. And yet those damn fools call themselves Mr. Bates friends. But I don't intend to talk any more to you in this vein [Rollins had favored the delay in calling the Convention in December.] . . . I tell you we shall yet get the old man nominated at Chicago and carry the Country for him at the election in November & then I shall insist upon a foreign mission for Switzler or anything else to get him out of the Country. We must have all the old Whigs in the State of Missouri of the same kidney provided for in the same way & then I shall begin to work for the good time coming. . . . If Bates is not nominated, you ask me, who next? "After me the Deluge" said a great Monarch— After Bates I say I dont care a d—n— Neither of the men you name are likely to be heard and as I am quite indifferent I can only make a guess and give you a sort of speculative opinion— Bates could certainly be elected & make a good President & therefore I consider his chances the best. Old McLane of the Supreme Court [would] be equally certain but he would be no account earthly— He stands 2nd on the list of chances— Next & last is old Ben Wade of Ohio who might possibly be elected & would be the best man for President in the U. S.— Nobody else can be elected & hence I dont speculate on their chances.[24]

Few men could have guessed more wildly on the nomination at Chicago than he did in that letter. He continued to work for Bates, using his father's plan for uniting the opposition to the Democracy, but he found obstacles everywhere in such men as Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, men who feared for their own success in an open revolt, or those who wanted the party to commit itself in favor of abolition, or men who feared the South might secede if the Republicans actually won at the polls.[25] As late as May 5, he wrote from Washington begging Rollins to be in Chicago to help nominate Bates, whose chances he considered

[24] Rollins MSS. [25] Blair MSS. F. P. Blair, Jr., to M. Blair, Apr. 25, 1860.

the best of any of the men spoken of for the nomination. A great surprise was in store for him when he reached Chicago.

3

The split in the Democratic party in its convention at Charleston made the election of a Republican President of the United States a foregone conclusion. Unity within the Democracy was an impossibility after 1856. A group of Southern fire-eaters including Jefferson Davis, Yancy, Breckinridge, and Quitman were determined to rule or secede. Southern representatives in the Senate made that body a forum in which to threaten or intimidate Republicans and Northern Democrats during 1859 and 1860. Douglas was a standing candidate before his party for the nomination for President. He had a very strong following in the North, and a few sane Southerners like Crittenden supported him from the South.[26] He was attacked by both Republicans and Democrats in Congress, on the platform, and in the press. He had passed under the Caudine Forks of the Buchanan administration. In his attempt to appease the South, to win its support in the approaching election, he crawled upon his belly, as it were, by the introduction of a bill which, if enacted into law, would have required the national government to use troops and penitentiaries to stamp out utterly such insurrectos as John Brown. The Southern senators laughed his bill to scorn; they were sick of his compromises and his "Freeport doctrine." They demanded a Southern administration elected on a platform which should embody the resolutions introduced by Davis in the Senate.[27] The fourth and crucial one of those resolutions declared "that neither Congress nor a territorial legislature, by direct or indirect and unfriendly legislation, had the power to annul the constitutional right of citizens to take slaves into the common territories; but it was the duty of the federal government to afford for slaves, as for other species of property, the needful protection."

Thus while the Blairs, Doolittle, Schurz, and Greeley were lambasting Douglas, the old Southern Democracy was aligning itself with Davis to kill the "Little Giant" as a party leader. As

[26] Coleman, *Crittenden*, II, 162-64. [27] February 2, 1860.

early as February 11, Schurz wrote to Doolittle that Douglas could be destroyed "completely at the North," and "I think he is at your mercy now." [28] On March 1, ex-Governor Letcher, of Kentucky, did not believe Douglas could possibly succeed in obtaining the nomination, but that Bates would be the nominee at Chicago if Douglas won at Charleston.

It was unfortunate that the Democratic party at Cincinnati in 1856 voted to hold its next national convention in Charleston, South Carolina, the very hot-bed of pro-slavery territory and the center of America's aristocratic slavocracy. The people all over the Union in 1860 were nervous, and anxious eyes turned toward Charleston when the convention met on April 2.

Every state in the Union was fully represented when the convention opened with Caleb Cushing as permanent chairman. Northern Democrats were aghast at the inevitableness of the result before them. They, however, stood firmly behind Douglas and his principle of "the sacred right of self-government." Contested seats in Illinois and New York were decided in his favor. But he failed to command a majority of the delegates present because of the enmity which had been aroused in the South and the unrelenting antagonism of Buchanan.

The convention decided to adopt a platform before it nominated a candidate. Douglas was pleased with that because he believed the delegates would agree on his principle of popular sovereignty. On that point he was wrong, for his doctrine was as hateful as Sewardism to the cotton states. Only the West, personally loyal and enthusiastic, insisted on Douglas at any price, and it carried the North with it. The South decided in caucus to stand on the Davis Senate resolutions. Seward's prophecy was true—an irrepressible conflict had developed within the party. Majority and minority reports on resolutions were returned on the fifth day.

The majority recommended a platform to include a declaration that a "territorial legislature has no power to abolish slavery in a territory, to prohibit the introduction of slaves therein, or destroy the right of property in slaves therein, or destroy the right of property in slaves by any legislation whatever; and that it is

[28] Doolittle MSS.

the duty of the federal government to protect, whenever necessary, slavery in the territories." The minority report presented by Mr. Samuels, of Iowa, endorsed the Cincinnati platform of 1856. A combination of Western and Northern votes adopted the minority report by 165 to 138. With reference to slavery in territories it stated in the second resolution "that the Democratic party will abide by the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States on the questions of constitutional law."

The speech of Henry B. Payne, of Ohio, on the minority report was received with loud demonstrations of approval by the Douglas supporters and with respect by the South. The delegates, realizing the gravity of the situation, did not drink and carouse as in former conventions. They knew that the fate of a government hung in the balance. Before such an audience Payne delivered his conciliatory speech in an impressive manner. He told them that, "The Northern mind" was "thoroughly imbued with the principle of popular sovereignty." The North asked nothing for the people of the territories but what the Constitution allowed it. It asked for the observance of the decisions of the Supreme Court. He was answered by Yancy, of Alabama, prince of the fire-eaters, who took the floor amid deafening cheers from the galleries. "He was tall and slender, with long black hair, a mild and gentlemanly manner, and an habitual expression of good humor; dressed in pronounced Southern style, his appearance was picturesque. As he opened his mouth, his words of passion, uttered in a soft, musical voice, gave him the rapt attention of the audience." [29] With the zealotry of a missionary of the early Eighteenth Century, he demanded the protection of the Constitution for slavery. "Ours is the property invaded—ours the interests at stake." He said to the North, "The honor of our children, the honor of our females, the lives of our men, all rest upon you. You would make a great seething caldron of passion and crime if you were able to consummate your measures." Your abolitionists were once pelted with rotten eggs; now you accept their principles in Black Republicanism.

Senator Pugh, of Ohio, a dear friend to Douglas, sprang to his feet at the close of Yancy's exhortation and made the declara-

[29] Rhodes, II, 445-49.

tion that the South was mistaken, if it believed the Northern Democrats would acquiesce in the extension of slavery. The convention continued amidst excitement and gloom until the adoption of the Douglas platform at which time the delegates from Alabama withdrew as a protest and ultimatum, soon to be followed by those from six other cotton states. Glenn, of Mississippi, almost choked with rage and excitement, declared as he withdrew, "We say, go your way and we will go ours. But the South leaves not like Hagar, driven into the wilderness and alone, for in sixty days you will find a united South standing shoulder to shoulder." [30]

The convention, after the secession of about forty-five delegates, was unable to elect Douglas by a two-thirds majority, and adjourned to meet in Baltimore, June 18, at which time Douglas was nominated. The fire-eaters convened at Richmond, June 11, and nominated one of their number, John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, a cousin of the Blairs. These two Democratic tickets were accompanied by a third faction. The Constitutional Union party composed of old Whigs, a few Know-nothings, and some Democrats met in Baltimore, on May 9, and nominated John Bell, of Tennessee. They pledged themselves to support the Constitution and "maintain, protect, and defend, separately and unitedly," the union of the States and the enforcement of the laws of the Union.[31]

The die was cast. Alexander Stephens wrote to R. M. Johnston, June 19, that "the seceders [at Charleston] intended from the beginning to rule or ruin and when they find they cannot rule, they will ruin. . . . Envy, hate, jealousy, spite—these make war in heaven, which made devils of men." The secession movement was instituted by nothing but bad passions. Shortly after the convention, Stephens, in a conversation with Johnston, said: "Men will be cutting one another's throats in a little while. In less than twelve months we shall be in a war, and that the bloodiest in history."

The split in the Democracy made the Republicans confident of victory. They as a crusading party of six years' existence were concerned more with the problem of availability of candidates

[30] *Ibid.*, 450-51. [31] Stanwood, ch. 21.

than with unity of party. Seward was the favorite. He had experience, ability, and popularity among the radical leaders. But as the time for the convention approached there developed a feeling that, if he were nominated, he could not be elected. Opposition from the extreme conservatives, the commercial classes in New England, and Horace Greeley was too much for his friends to overcome. A host of favorite sons were hopeful. Among them were Chase, Cameron, Bates, McLean, Wade, Caleb Smith, Wilson, Fessenden, Pennington, and Lincoln. Not a man of them was known less to the country than Lincoln.

Several factors were combined to favor Lincoln. He had not been in the public eye as a leader in national politics, consequently, he had few enemies. His debates with Douglas, and his Cooper Union speech of February 27, 1860, gained for him much notoriety among the intelligentsia. Local political situations in Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, favored him rather than Seward. As a product of the frontier, his name appealed to the Northwest. And the decision of the National Republican Committee to hold the nominating convention in Chicago was greatly in his favor, although, the Committee thought of Chicago as neutral territory. St. Louis wanted it in order to elect Bates; New York wanted it in the hope that Seward would be chosen, but the fine hand of Norman Judd, of Illinois, and member of the Committee, turned the trick. Chicago beat St. Louis by one vote. A supporter of Bates rightly claims that, if the convention had been held in St. Louis, Lincoln could not have been nominated.[32]

The eyes of the country turned as anxiously toward Chicago as they had toward Charleston. Four hundred and sixty-six delegates assembled in the swampy, western city, a part of which was built on stilts. The convention opened, May 16, with David Wilmot as temporary president.

Blair, senior, was willingly a delegate-at-large from Maryland. Montgomery represented the 6th District, and Frank was a delegate-at-large from Missouri.[33] How tremendously different everything in this convention was from that of 1856! Now, the Blairs

[32] Gibson, *op. cit.*

[33] M. Halstead, *A History of the National Political Conventions of the Current Presidential Campaign* (Columbus, Ohio, 1860), 125-30.

found themselves jostled about by office-seekers who wanted positions; then, they were a family among crusaders. Then, hope was paramount, now the confidence of victory. Rhodes makes an interesting comparison between the two Republican conventions in these words:[84]

> . . . Then a hall accommodating two thousand was quite sufficient, now a wigwam holding ten thousand was jammed, and twenty thousand people outside clamored for admittance; then the wire-pullers looked askance at a movement whose success was problematical, now they hastened to identify themselves with a party that apparently had the game in its own hand; then the delegates were liberty-loving enthusiasts and largely volunteers, now the delegates had been chosen by means of the organization peculiar to a powerful party, and in political wisdom were the pick of the Republicans; then the contest to follow seemed but a tentative effort and the leading men would not accept the nomination, while now triumph appeared so sure that every one of the master spirits of the party was eager to be the candidate.

Eminent men sat on the floor and platform. They were proof of the fact that the Republican party was no longer a foundling. Among them were the three Blairs, Preston King, David Wilmot, John A. Andrew, Gideon Welles, Gratz Brown, Cassius M. Clay, Carl Schurz, Thurlow Weed, Thomas Corwin, William M. Evarts, Joshua Giddings, George William Curtis, George Ashmun, and George S. Boutwell. About nine hundred reporters and editors were present. Greeley did not want to go to Chicago, but he was there as one of the most active participants. Henry Villard, Murat Halstead, Samuel Bowles, A. K. McClure, Joseph White, and Joseph Hawley were some of the other journalists whose names are familiar.

It was evident from the first day that the contest for the nomination would narrow to that between Lincoln and Seward. The friends of the latter came to Chicago well prepared to carry the convention by storm. Two thousand applauders came from New York, some of whom were professional and led by the notorious prize-fighter and street-politician, Tom Heyer. The celebrated Dodsworth's Band led them while Gilmore's Band led the New England delegation. His friends permitted money and

[84] Vol. II, 457.

liquor to flow freely. The bands serenaded and the noisy supporters shouted at every mention of the name Seward. Not to be outdone, the Lincoln men had imported rustics with lusty voices. Possibly ten thousand men from Illinois and Indiana marched, shouted, and fought for Lincoln. One-half of the Representatives in Congress were in Chicago. Curious spectators drifted about on the sidewalks built on piles, in the streets, and elsewhere. They had come to see Chicago flushed with youthful ardor and strength. Forty thousand strangers crowded the city.

The convention was actually well under way before May 16. The streets were a forum for the multitudes a week earlier. The Blairs held a consultation at Silver Spring before May 5, and went on to Chicago to pull every possible wire for Bates. Greeley talked incessantly against Seward. "There's old Greeley," some one would say, and soon a crowd would gather to hear him explain the unavailability of Seward. He had written earlier to his friend Pike that, "If Douglas shall be nominated, I think Bates will have to be, unless we mean to rush on certain destruction . . . 'Capital States' and 'Labor States' is foolish. Slave States and Free States tells the story." [35] His influence at Chicago was worth a state delegation. Every street corner in the busy section became a rostrum where speakers harangued the crowds. One demonstration followed another made by the marchers headed by their bands and banners. Flags and banners for Lincoln floated from windows, housetops, and across the streets. And beneath all the din there was conducted one of the hardest won pieces of political strategy in American history—in hotel rooms and at headquarters of the various candidates.

Probably the liveliest secret caucuses and the most effective wire-pulling were at the Tremont House. The Illinois delegation chose it for their Lincoln headquarters, and Frank Blair, with his Missouri delegation, rented a suite of rooms on the first floor for his headquarters for Bates. The elder Blair and Greeley were the lions there. About them the crowds gathered to hear words of wisdom. They were the expediency men, conservatives as compared with the radicals who supported Seward. Greeley, a "curious looking, spectacled old gentleman, with hair of nondescript

[35] Pike, *op. cit.*, 501.

color and lambrequin variety of whiskers," was stared at by strangers as he shuffled about. The Sewardites called him "a damned old ass." Seward's headquarters were at the Richmond House where "Lord Thurlow" Weed and his friends did what they thought best for his nomination. The Seward "Irrepressibles" were a noisy, drinking, ballyhooing crowd "rigged out in feathers and epauletts." They could swear as loud and long, howl as ferociously, and raise as much "hell generally" as any gang of Democrats at a convention in Baltimore or Cincinnati.

The convention opened with vociferous cheering and a keynote speech from Wilmot. Celebrities in the party took their seats on the platform. Of some of them who were cheered, Blair, senior, received an especially long ovation that pleased him greatly. His two sons and friends sitting with him gave to the spectacle the appearance of a Blair family party. He was placed on the Committee on Resolutions when the convention perfected its permanent organization. After temporary committees were appointed, George Ashmun, of Massachusetts, was elected permanent chairman. He was escorted to his seat in the afternoon session by Preston King and Carl Schurz. King was "short and round as a barrel and fat as butter" and Schurz was very tall and slender. Wild enthusiasm greeted the trio as they smilingly marched down the aisle to the platform. Ashmun delivered an acceptable speech in his clear, full-toned voice and speedily proceeded in an effective manner to guide the convention in its deliberations.

The convention adjourned at an early hour Wednesday evening to meet at ten o'clock next morning. Many delegates and visitors had gone to the Lake on an excursion provided by the hospitable Chicago Board of Trade. The crowds in the streets near the Tremont House and Richmond House were prodigious. Men could hardly get from room to room in the Tremont House. Possibly fifteen hundred intended, or tried, to sleep there. Many of the delegates kept up the excitement until morning. Part of the Missouri delegation sang songs in their parlor at two o'clock. At that late hour caucusing continued, glasses clinked in the barrooms, and brass bands blared on the streets.[36]

In the caucuses matters were taking their course. During that

[36] P. O. Ray, *The Convention That Nominated Lincoln* (Chicago, 1916), 20-23.

afternoon the delegates from Pennsylvania and Indiana met in rooms at the county court house for a consultation. The Quaker State delegates knew that Cameron had no chance and were inclined to make a prominent Whig their second choice. Bates would fill the bill. Montgomery Blair was invited to speak to them on Bates. He argued that with Bates "we could carry Missouri & Maryland with them & thus avoid the sectional [feeling] upon which the South relied on to alarm our people & prevent them from voting for our Candidate. . . . But [with] Seward who was a rawhead & bloody to the South we should have the theory of disunion to meet & I knew he would be defeated." Friends of Seward slipped away to warn Evarts of Blair's speech, and brought Evarts who spoke at length for Seward after he heard Blair speak for three-quarters of an hour. Evarts promised Pennsylvania the money to carry the state, if she would vote for Seward.[37] The Whig element in Indiana was strong. The delegates were undecided. Frank Blair, hearing of the meeting, thought his opportunity had come to swing both states to Bates. He hurried to the court house where he spoke to the Indiana delegation, urging Bates as a candidate who would be acceptable to the border states, and not be a cause for secession if he were elected. Fred Muench and Judge Arnold Krekel followed him with speeches for Bates, and promised the vote of Missouri for their candidate. Gustave Koerner, of Illinois, then spoke effectively for Lincoln. He declared that no Republican could carry Missouri, that Blair had made it a Douglas state in 1858, that Bates had supported the Know-nothings since 1856, and that the necessary German voters in Republican states would not vote for him. Blair replied, but was immediately followed by Orville Browning who eulogized Lincoln. Blair's attempt to swing Indiana and Pennsylvania to Bates failed. It has been believed that Indiana voted for Lincoln on the first ballot because Lincoln promised Smith a position in his Cabinet, but that story has been apparently disproved. Illinois realized that her task was to convince Indiana of the necessity of voting for Lincoln as an available candidate. Indiana was divided on Bates and McLean. After three

[37] Blair MSS. M. Blair to G. Welles, Oct. 17, 1870; M. Blair to Welles, Dec. 12, 1873.

days of persuasion she decided in favor of Lincoln as the most desirable candidate and finally cast her vote for him on the first ballot.[38] Possibly Governor Henry S. Lane's appeal to support Lincoln had much to do with her action. He declared that his people in southern Indiana would never vote for Seward. He wanted to be reëlected governor, and with Seward at the head of his ticket he faced defeat.[39] Indiana's influence and votes were decisive at a critical moment.

The Illinois delegation anxiously ran from delegation to delegation, pleading, haranguing, and promising for Lincoln. His name had grown in favor ever since he was nominated as the rail candidate at Decatur. Greeley refused to support him because he believed Lincoln was too inexperienced. The "Irrepressibles" were willing and insisted that Lincoln be nominated for second place with Seward. Illinois feared that might happen in the convention, and they worked night and day to prevent it. Their anxiety and uncertainty on Thursday were harrowing. Had a ballot been taken on that day Seward undoubtedly would have been the choice of the convention.

The Thursday morning session opened with a packed house. Visitors who crowded into the seats with the delegations were forced to find other places. Galleries provided for the women were heavily sprinkled with men who had begged women to escort them. It was a gay and picturesque scene for the chairman to face as he brought down the historic gavel. The convention was soon invited to send "some effective speakers to entertain twenty thousand Republicans and their wives outside the building."

A preliminary contest arose over the admission of certain Southern delegates. The Blair forces were defeated by those of Seward as were the Lincoln forces in their demand for practically a two-thirds rule. Another slight contest developed over the inclusion of the Declaration of Independence in the platform. The reading of the platform section by section received tremendous applause—the loudest bursts being given to the homestead

[38] Tarbell, II, 347; Charles Roll, "Indiana's Part in the Nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860," in *Indiana Magazine of History,* XXV, No. 11, Mar., 1929.

[39] Addison G. Procter, *Lincoln and the Convention of 1860* (Chicago, 1918), 13.

and tariff clauses. The Committee on Resolutions desired a campaign document that was conservative and practical. It, consequently, wrote one that appealed to the conservatives. Idealistic and radical clauses in the platform of 1856 were stricken out of the platform of 1860. The white-haired old anti-slavery veteran, Joshua R. Giddings, objected to the omission of the passage in the Declaration of Independence beginning with "We solemnly assert the self-evident truths that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," and moved an amendment to include that portion of it. After his impassioned speech in defense of the amendment, Cartter of Ohio strenuously objected to it on the ground that the convention might as well reassert the Ten Commandments. A second delegate joined in the opposition, and no other coming to its support, the convention brusquely voted it down. The chairman with apparent satisfaction declared it lost. Giddings and his friends thereupon rose to leave the Wigwam and withdraw from the convention. As they passed down the aisle, George William Curtis, of *Harper's Weekly* and a delegate from the 1st District in New York, stopped Giddings and begged him to remain until he might offer a second amendment embodying essentially the same thought which the rejected one contained. Curtis feared that the departure of Giddings meant the retirement of the "Sons of Liberty" who might prove to be indispensable to Republican success.

He obtained the floor and offered a second amendment, making an impassioned plea for its adoption. His amendment merely changed the form of that which Giddings offered, but included the opening words of the Declaration of Independence. "Instantly there was an uproar, and the point of order was vociferously made that the Convention had just virtually passed upon the same amendment." Chairman Ashmun was visibly irritated by the interference of Curtis and peremptorily passed to the next business.

But the controversy was not so easily settled. During the reading of the platform and the debate upon the Giddings amendment, Curtis had observed across the aisle, a few feet from him, "a sturdy sandy-haired man, who sat carelessly swinging one leg and foot over the arm of the seat, and squirting tobacco juice

upon the floor, apparently indifferent to everything that took place. But as Mr. Ashmun peremptorily ruled, the sandy-haired man by a sudden spring raised himself erect upon his feet, standing on the seat, and with a voice that commanded the chair so that he instinctively turned and could not help recognizing the speaker, exclaimed, 'Mr. President!' Mr. Ashmun responded, 'The gentleman from Missouri.' 'I rise to a point of order.' 'The gentleman will state it.' 'My point is that the amendment of the gentleman from Ohio was to one clause of the resolutions, and that of the gentleman from New York to another, and that the question, therefore, has not been decided by the Convention.' The point was indisputable." The "gentleman from Missouri" was Frank Blair. Mr. Ashmun immediately agreed to re-submit the amendment. After some further remarks the convention enthusiastically adopted the amendment, and Giddings and his friends resumed their seats. A crisis was thus passed without the alienation of the radical voters.[40]

The unanimous adoption of the platform was followed by a demonstration rarely seen. In an instant after the announcement of the vote, fifteen thousand people sprang to their feet to give cheer after cheer in a deafening tumultuous roar. "Men waved their hats, women their handkerchiefs, reporters their written pages, and all screamed with very joy. This wild excitement was kept up for some ten or fifteen minutes."[41] Friends of Lincoln prevented the nomination of Seward on the spot by moving for adjournment. The motion which carried gave Lincoln the nomination next day, but no one realized it at the time.

That night the Lincoln men worked frantically to secure promises of support on the morrow. Halstead believed the border states held the key. He sent a dispatch to the Cincinnati *Commercial* saying that "The Pennsylvanians declare if Seward were nominated they would be immediately ruined. They could do nothing. The majority against them would be counted by tens of thousands. New Jerseyites say the same thing. The Indianians are of the same opinion. They look broken-hearted at the sugges-

[40] *Harper's Weekly,* Aug. 7, 1875. It is evident that Curtis either wrote the account in *Harper's,* or told the story to one of the editors. See also Ray, *Con. that Nom. Lincoln,* 23-25; Halstead, *op. cit.,* 137.

[41] Ray, *Con. that Nom. Lincoln,* 25.

tion that Seward has the inside track, and throw up their hands in despair. They say Lane will be beaten, the legislature pass utterly into the hands of the Democrats and the two Republican senators hoped for heard of no more. Illinois agonizes at the mention of Seward, and says he is the sting of political death. His nomination would kill off [Senator] Trumbull and give the legislature into the hands of the Democrats."

It was absolutely necessary to have the votes of three of those states to win the election in November. A caucus of their delegations was held at noon on Thursday to decide what to do. Seward was unacceptable, but they failed to agree on another. A committee of twelve was appointed to reach an agreement. By Friday morning at ten o'clock they had decided to support Lincoln after the first ballot. The expectation that a nomination would be made Friday caused an immense throng to pour into the Wigwam filling every corner available for a human being. The convention was now keyed to the highest pitch of excitement.

The session opened at ten o'clock with a prayer during which the minister entreated God to "perpetuate our liberties," and in some not too distant future arrest the progress of "the evils which now invest the body politic."[42] President Ashmun's declaration that nominations were in order was greeted with great applause and cries of "question." At that critical moment Montgomery Blair begged leave to file credentials for five additional delegates for Maryland, making sixteen for his state, thirteen of whom would be for Bates. One of the three Seward men from Maryland opposed the motion on the ground that God Almighty only knew where the five men lived. The motion was lost to the Seward men who moved the previous question and sustained it by a large vote.[43] The convention proceeded to make nominations at once.

William M. Evarts was the first to obtain the recognition of the Chair. "I take the liberty," he said, "to name as a candidate to be nominated by this convention for the office of President of the United States, William H. Seward." A tremendous *claque* broke forth with a deafening shout. Judd hurriedly and briefly

[42] Greeley, *Proceedings*, 143.
[43] Halstead, *op. cit.*, 144; Greeley, *Proceedings*, 145-47.

presented the name of Lincoln which was followed by a roar greater than the first. The Illinois delegation had planted the Wigwam with stentorian voices, men who would have been insulted to be outdone by the New York noise makers. The Lincoln men crowded into the Wigwam while Seward's men were marching exultantly through the streets. The women were instructed to wave flags and handkerchiefs at every mention of Lincoln's name. Signals were arranged to notify the thousands without of the proceedings within. Judd's nomination started the machinery. But the "Irrepressibles" outbellowed the Westerners when Seward's nomination was seconded. Smith's second for Lincoln was a signal for the West to bellow for Abe-the-rail-splitter. "No mortal," says Swett, of Illinois, "ever before saw such a scene. The idea of us Hoosiers and Suckers being outscreamed would have been as bad to them as the loss of their man. Five thousand people at once leaped to their seats, women not wanting in the number, and the wild yell made soft vesper breathings of all that had preceded. No language can describe it. A thousand steam whistles, ten acres of hotel gongs, a tribe of Comanches, headed by a choice vanguard from pandemonium, might have mingled in the scene unnoticed." [44]

Frank Blair nominated Bates. Chase, Dayton, Cameron, and McLean were nominated, and each received "applause," but it was evident that Seward and Lincoln were the favorites. Balloting was begun without delay. The first ballot ended at 173½ for Seward; for Lincoln, 102; for Bates, 48; for Cameron, 50½; for Chase, 49; and for McLean, 12; for others, 30. Necessary for a choice, were 233 out of 456 votes cast. One ripple of discord appeared when three of the Maryland delegates refused to vote for Bates and protested the authority of their chairman to cast the solid vote of the delegation.

The second ballot began at once. Pennsylvania's delegation hastily decided to switch from Cameron and McLean to Lincoln. New York was stunned by the announcement that Pennsylvania cast her fifty votes for Lincoln. She realized the break was coming. The second ballot ended with Lincoln at 181, Seward at 184½, and Bates at 35. The announcement of Lincoln's gain was greeted by tremendous applause. The stampede to Lincoln came

[44] Tarbell, I, 354.

in the third and last ballot when the breathless spectators, trying to follow their tally sheets, saw Lincoln pile up a lead of 231½ to 180 for Seward. Profound stillness gripped the convention; only the scratching of pencils and the ticking telegraph instruments were audible. Then Cartter, of Ohio, sprang to his feet and announced the change of four votes to Lincoln. The faces of New Yorkers blanched. Greeley smiled complacently as he saw Weed press his hand to his wet eyelids. Illinois shed tears of joy, grasped hands and struggled to stay their sobs. A secretary broke the silence by crying to a man who was stationed on the roof of the Wigwam to signal to the crowd outside: "Fire the salute! Abe Lincoln is nominated!"

The scene which followed is beyond human description. Every conceivable way of expressing joy by a frenzied convention was used. Without, the roaring cannon, shrieking whistles, and ringing bells carried the news to the prairies—a frontiersman was again the nominee of a great party.

Missouri cast her eighteen votes for Bates on three ballots. Maryland switched nine to Lincoln on the third ballot. Seward and Lincoln received the news of the results in their respective home towns. The former took his defeat manfully, although it was a bitter disappointment to him. When his heart-broken friends could not write a complimentary editorial for Lincoln, to be published in their local Republican newspaper, Seward heroically took the pen and wrote it himself. His friends had fought a great fight and he had been confident of success until the last moment. Weed had begged Curtin of Pennsylvania and Lane of Indiana for their support on Thursday and Friday.[45] New York was willing to pour out her money on Seward, but her offers were in vain.[46] For the support of the Blairs, Seward had already offered to the elder Blair, the nomination for the vice-presidency for Frank, but the old editor refused to desert Bates.[47] As a matter of fact, Seward had not the vice-presidency to offer,

[45] Curtis, *op. cit.*, I, 361; Cook, *op. cit.*, 73; Rhodes, II, 468.

[46] Blair MSS. M. Blair to G. Welles, Dec. 12, 1873.

[47] Cassius M. Clay MSS., in possession of Stephen I. Gilchrist, Detroit, Michigan. M. Blair to C. Clay, Dec. 31, 1881. The original draft of this letter is in the Blair MSS. I have no proof that this offer was not made as Blair explains it, nor have I further proof that the offer was made. That it failed to come to light before 1881 is somewhat surprising. I have reasons to believe that Montgomery was truthful. This letter was to a personal friend and not intended for publication. The offer was not beyond what Seward believed he could fulfill.

for it was tendered to Hannibal Hamlin by a wildly enthusiastic convention."[48]

How Lincoln received the news is well known. Thirty-six hours after the news reached him a distinguished delegation arrived in Springfield to notify him of his nomination. These gentlemen were greeted with the booming of cannon, the shooting of rockets, the playing of bands and loud cheering from the multitude. Frank Blair, Carl Schurz, George Ashmun, Gideon Welles, William M. Evarts, and others composed the committee. Some of these men who had never seen Lincoln were heart-sick when they saw before them a man of great height with drooping shoulders, huge hands and feet, loosely jointed limbs, sunken cheeks, a protruding lip, an unsymmetrical mouth, high cheek bones, and a bronzed skin. But they were thrilled to see him change to an erect, firm individual with eyes beaming with fire and intelligence as soon as he began his reply to Ashmun's speech. His dignified demeanor, his brief remarks appropriately expressed, and his calm, clear voice convinced them that here was a master after all. One of them who had voted against Lincoln in the convention said to Schurz, "Sir, we might have done a more daring thing, but we certainly could not have done a better thing."

4

Who was Lincoln? That question was on the lips of many voters. To the South he was a Black Republican and an abolitionist; to the North he was an able debater with a useful political philosophy and an available candidate; and to the West he was their representative American. The Charleston *Mercury* thought he was "a horrid looking wretch" who was "sooty and scoundrelly in aspect, a cross between the nutmeg dealer, the horse swapper and the night man . . . a lanksided Yankee."

E. Stabler, a Bates supporter, suffered a depression of spirit after "the flare up at Chicago." Bates, he considered a talented man widely known, but Lincoln, why, he had "scarcely heard of Lincoln, & little more of Hamlin."[49] Doolittle was elated. He

[48] Greeley, *Proceedings,* 160. Hamlin had four brothers whose names were Europe, Asia, Africa and America.—*Harper's Weekly,* Jan. 8, 1876.

[49] Blair MSS. Stabler to M. Blair, June 21, 1860.

believed they were making "a real Republican party . . . no old fogy or conservative party, but one that can march to the logic of Events and keep step with the Providence of God." He was confident that Lincoln could be elected.[50] Another Republican wrote that "Greeley slaughtered Seward and saved the party." Blair Lee remembers hearing his mother tell of meeting Charles Sumner on the streets of Washington after the nomination of Lincoln. He was greatly disappointed and said solemnly: "Mrs. Lee, we are wholly ruined." Men like James Russell Lowell were greatly disappointed in the choice of the convention, but it was not long until the North regarded the selection as "the wisest one that could have been made." Douglas remarked to a group of Republicans, when he heard of the nomination: "Gentlemen, you have nominated a very able and a very honest man."

Frank Blair hurried home to prepare to announce for Lincoln. Thrilling his audience with his oratory, he said: "I will support Abraham Lincoln because he represents the cause of human rights and the preservation of the Union. I will support him because of the broad statesmanship he has shown in the notable debate with his renowned adversary. I will support him because he is true and honest and will be faithful in discharging the duties of the high position to which the people of the nation will assign him."

The Blairs, who had helped to write the platform, could heartily endorse it. First and foremost, it declared that the "federal Constitution, the rights of the States, and the Union of the States must and shall be preserved." That was Jacksonian. Secondly, every state had the right to determine and control its own "domestic institutions," and lawless invasions were denounced as the "greatest of crimes." Thirdly, the platform contained a plank in which the administration of Buchanan was condemned for trying to establish the Lecompton Constitution, and it recommended that Kansas be admitted under the recently formed constitution in that territory. This plank corresponded with the views of the Blairs on the prohibition of slavery in the territories as well as agreeing with Frank Blair's policy. The fourth stated that the party would oppose the extension of slavery, and denied

[50] Doolittle MSS. To his wife, May 29, and June 26, 1860.

that Congress, or a territorial legislature, or any individual had the right to "give legal existence to slavery in any Territory in the United States." It went on record for a homestead law; protection of naturalized citizens at home and elsewhere; for river and harbors improvements by aid of Congress; and for aid from the national government for a railroad to the Pacific. Benton had supported the homestead law; Frank Blair supported any movement for improvement of rivers, harbors, and canals while he was in the 37th Congress,[51] and he had spoken in Boston (1859) for the building of a railroad to the Pacific.

The Republicans went to work in earnest. Lincoln felt reasonably certain of success. Douglas alone could have defeated him, but with Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell to split the Democratic vote, that was quite a different thing. The Republicans began the colorful campaign with the cry of "scoundrels and corruptionists" —they must be ousted from office. In Pennsylvania, Governor Curtin made the questions of the tariff and free territories the issues. Even Douglas spoke in favor of protection to home industries while he campaigned in Pennsylvania. In New Jersey the Republicans lifted their voices against the extension of slavery and the Buchanan administration. In a few states the issues were purely local, in others slavery was the main issue.

The campaign began with the burning of tar barrels in exultant demonstrations on the day of the nomination. Orators hurriedly looked up the history of Lincoln in order to tell the people who he was when they held their ratification meetings. Newspapers printed the meagre sketches which were available. Greeley denied the charge that Lincoln was a "nullity." He was a rail-splitting, third-rate, country lawyer from the wilderness, said the Democrats. He knew "neither Latin, nor Greek, had never travelled, had no pedigree"; he was not a gentleman, they said tauntingly. But Bryant came nearer the truth when he said in defense that Mr. Lincoln was "A Real Representative Man."[52]

Lincoln became the rail candidate. The Pennsylvanians bought the whole fence which he had mauled out at Macon, Illinois, and had it shipped east. The rail, emblematic of rural

[51] 37th Congress, 2d session, *Congressional Globe* (Washington, 1861 *seq.*), 902.
[52] Tarbell, I, 365.

America, equality, and hard labor, soon decorated campaign medals, inspired songs, and appeared in cartoons. Mass meetings caught the popular favor. The Wide-Awakes set the fashion for the Republicans. They had torchlight processions, transparencies, rings, rails, and pins; they marched in military formation, wearing glazed hats and oilcloth capes, singing:

> Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
> Out of the wilderness, out of the wilderness,
> Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
> Down in Illinois!

The Democrats, not to be outdone, organized the Douglas Guards, the Ever Readys, and the Little Giants. They cried, "Cuba must be ours," and "We want a statesman not a rail-splitter as President." The South marched behind "the Breckinridge Minute Men, with blue Nullification cockades on their hats." Some of the fire-eaters pledged themselves in secret societies to march to Washington armed with rifles and revolvers to prevent the inauguration of the Black Republican Lincoln.

Montgomery Blair found it very difficult to organize a Republican party in Maryland. Men who were presumably gentlemen resorted to mob law to prevent him from speaking in Baltimore.[58] Henry Winter Davis misled the Republicans of Baltimore into believing that Blair would not run an electoral ticket for Lincoln, and by so doing allow the Americans full sway. Davis cowered from the reproach of Republican. The party had been "a concealed one, its sentiments not safely or wisely to be avowed. . . . We are now able I think," wrote Blair's friend in Baltimore, "by an independent forward movement to overcome" this timidity of our friends, and "impress the most insolent of our opponents with respect." A number of the Republicans were so disturbed by what they called the insidiousness of Davis and Governor Thomas Hicks that they persuaded Blair to correspond with Davis.

Davis was a brilliant orator and controversialist, a dangerous character with whom to compete for supremacy in Maryland. He was a Whig until his party dissolved and then he became a Know-nothing. As such he served in Congress from 1858 to 1861.

[58] Blair MSS. W. L. Marshall to M. Blair, May 5, 1860.

In 1861 he announced himself as a constitutional unionist. The legislature of Maryland censured him for voting for Pennington in 1859, and since he refused to join the Republicans, it was natural for a contest for leadership to spring up between him and Blair. Both men were positive and stubborn. Blair was the more conciliatory and politic in his demeanor, but Davis was more powerful and ingenious in his leadership of the people. A jealousy and enmity between them soon developed. It helped to undo Blair in Lincoln's Cabinet in 1864.

They could not agree on the subject of slavery in the territories. Blair maintained that the Congress had power to exclude slavery from the territories; that the executive should see that slavery was excluded in them; and that "if we do not maintain that Congress has the power we could not maintain that the Executive could do so, & the people would not give us a President who would exclude it unless they are convinced that Congress or the Govt. has the power to exclude it." The manner in which the question of free soil was put before the people was immaterial. "The people believe & I assert with good reason that unless the Govt. is put into the hands of those opposed to the Exclusion of slavery, . . . territory will be found to put slaves into. . . . Is it not proposed to take Cuba & to erect a protectorate over Mexico by men who feel the necessity of counterbalancing the growing South with additional slave states in order to maintain their supremacy in the Govt? . . . Bell if elected you would find in the hands of your opponents. . . . He deserted Genl Jackson with $52,000 of Biddle's money in his pocket, & supported old White in '36 in company with the Nullifiers." [54]

Davis asked, "Why talk about [the] Wilmot Proviso?" The question of exclusion by Congress was

nonsense for

1. there is no slavery in the territories to be expelled.
2. If there were, a law could not expel it if the Courts are to annul it.

For whatever way you take it this question of exclusion by law is forbid & ought to be abandoned.

I have always said the power of appointment—the Presidency, the

[54] Blair MSS. Draft of M. Blair letter to Davis, Oct. 15, 1860.

Administration,—is the decisive point, & that you threw away the Presidency in 1850 by discussing exclusion by law when with the Presidency the question is *settled* by that simple fact. The Pres't [President] makes the S[upreme] C[ourt] & that administers the law.[55]

Congressman Davis, Governor Hicks, and Mayor Thomas Swann, of Baltimore, were determined to crush any efforts which Blair made to establish an organization for Lincoln. The pro-slavery men were free to visit nothing but insult and abuse upon the heads of any Republican. Demonstrations for Lincoln were fraught with danger to the participants.[56] A few Republicans dared to avow their principles and vote for Lincoln. The conditions against which Blair and his Republican friends had to work may be illustrated by a letter from a Mr. Burnham in Charles County, Maryland:[57]

I hear indirectly that you are the candidate for Presidential elector on the Republican ticket. Will you please inform me on receipt of this if such is the fact and likewise give me your opinion about the policy of voteing for the Republican nominee here *I have to do so I have been a Slave* long enough and I am willing to avow my Republican principal and anxious to vote them although it may cost me my life! . . . (I am now 32 years of age) and I feel that it is high time to avow and assert my manhood. . . . I shall look to you to supply me with votes [ballots for his village].

A laborer from Clarksburg informed Blair that he distributed the tickets which he sent to him but that people threatened to deny him work and he was forced to quit. "Many voted their tickets open," he wrote, "for feare of truble. the feeling towards Mr. lincoln here among all partys Except the Brackenridge party is bad."

Twenty-three hundred men, according to the reported returns, voted the Blair-Lincoln ticket in Maryland. Breckinridge received seven hundred more votes than Bell. Man never faced a harder task than Blair when he attempted to turn Maryland Republican.

The Republicans of the 1st District in Missouri unanimously nominated Frank Blair by acclamation for Congress in their con-

[55] *Ibid.*, Davis to Blair, Oct. 14, 1860.
[56] *Ibid.*, Jno. M. Palmer to M. Blair, Oct. 22, 1860.
[57] *Ibid.*, Oct. 15, 1860.

vention of July 9. The nomination was no surprise to him. Judge Kelley promised him at the Chicago convention to go to St. Louis to help him open the campaign. The Eastern Republicans were concerned about his success. Before July ended Lyman Trumbull went to speak in his behalf in St. Louis. Greeley's *Tribune* urged his election as a "distinguished ornament" to Congress. The Republican politicians and the press considered the election of Blair as one of the most important events of the campaign.

Several factors favored him in his campaign. In the first place, he was the heir to Benton's Unionist following. The Blair family influence was potent at the time, and his name was before the Congress as the successful contestant with Barret for the latter's seat which he had obtained by corruption in the election of 1858. The Republicans were determined to defend a brother Republican wherever he might be running for office. The unfortunate death of Senator David C. Broderick, of California, in a duel with Judge Terry, of the California Supreme Court, in September, 1859, had created so profound a sensation throughout the North that it was still vivid in the minds of all active Republicans. Blair, with the rest of the North, accepted the news of his death as the result of the wrath of the pro-slavery element. He promised his father to be careful with his own life in Missouri, for he knew that he had been a marked man for years. Furthermore the Democracy in Missouri was in hopeless confusion.[58] The Bell and Breckinridge men were furious because the influential St. Louis *Republican* supported Douglas for President, C. F. Jackson for Governor, and Barret for Congress. The editors of the *Republican* denounced the Breckinridge press as secessionist in sentiment and of the Yancy school which deserved a defeat. The St. Louis Democracy was thus split irretrievably. The German newspapers, particularly the St. Louis *Anzieger* and the *Westliche Post,* supported Blair, although they refused to support the remainder of the state Republican ticket. The ticket smacked too much of the Bates movement which was disgusting to the editors of those papers. The *Anzeiger* proclaimed Blair as the "Champion of his party," and "our standard bearer." The *Westliche Post* advised its readers to

[58] John F. Snyder MSS., in the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. H. J. Robertson to Snyder, July 20, 1860.

attend the rallies for Blair, but to leave them when he was not the subject of support by speech or demonstration. The Germans identified Blair with "the National cause."

The last factor in Blair's favor was Barret, his opponent for Congress. Barret was familiarly known to his party devotees as "Missouri Dick." His speeches are entertaining, but they fail to carry conviction. He returned to St. Louis to conduct his campaign against Blair after he had been ejected from his seat ostensibly because of corruption at the polls in 1858. In a hot, arrogant speech in St. Louis, he said he was sick of "the eternal nigger question." He attributed the loss of his seat in Congress to two things: Blair influence and Republican trickery. Even Mrs. Blair of Silver Spring, came in for his condemnation because she had entertained the Black Republican leaders with strawberries and dancing at Silver Spring on the day before Congress heard the Blair-Barret controversy."[59]

The Blairs were disappointed when Rollins decided not to run for governor on the Republican ticket. They depended on him to help organize the party into an effective machine. During the whole year of 1859, Frank encouraged "Jim" Rollins to take his stand, but Rollins decided that it would "ruin and disgrace" him eternally to suffer another defeat. And that was certain to be his lot if he ran on the Republican ticket. He finally decided to run for Congress in the 2nd District on the Bell-Everett ticket. He was helped to reach this decision by his keen disappointment in the nomination of Lincoln at Chicago. He wanted "an unexceptionable man" at the head of the Republican ticket, a man like Bates, or some other strong Southern Whig. In his estimation, the Chicago convention "egregiously erred," so he denied the charge that he was a Republican, saying that it was "all a lie," and chose to support Bell and Everett as "wise National and Patriotic" men. But he asserted many times that "I am for final and eternal overthrow of the Democracy."[60]

Without Rollins, Blair was left to fight almost alone, although the strength of the influence of such characters as James B. Gardenshire, James O. Broadhead, Franklin A. Dick, and Samuel

[59] St. Louis *Republican*, July 1, 1860.
[60] Broadhead MSS. Rollins to Broadhead, June 5, 1860.

Glover must not be belittled. These were honest, sincere, devoted, and capable men. The real test was in St. Louis, for the Republicans stood not a ghost of a show elsewhere in the state. But in St. Louis, the older the campaign grew the hotter became the contest between the rivals. Followers of each vied with one another in making the most pompous demonstration. If the Democrats especially honored Barret with fanfare, the Republicans gave Blair a more pretentious reception at his next rally.

Blair challenged Barret to a series of debates. The challenge was accepted and four exciting debates occupied the attention of the St. Louisans until time for the election. The Democrats were begged to put forth every effort to redeem fair St. Louis from the foul stigma which Blair and his black confreres in Congress had cast upon it. Four thousand people gathered at Reservoir Garden to hear the first forensic battle. All the paraphernalia of a torchlight parade was in evidence—processions with torches, rockets, bands, and banners. Two hundred Democrats bore aloft hickory brooms to indicate that they expected a clean sweep. Barret appeared in his happiest style—so "entertaining," said the *Republican,* that he had to be heard to be appreciated. Blair did somewhat as Alexander Hamilton in an earlier day; he made his appearance at the last moment and spoke as long as the other speakers combined. He presented his speech in an emphatic manner setting forth his creed that "all men were born free and equal."

Enthusiasm waxed strong. An immense throng turned out at Sturgeon Market where the Democrats held a rally of their own. Reynolds adverted to the desperate conduct of the Black Republicans who had just imported Trumbull to mislead the people. Young men carried banners, one of which had emblazoned upon it: "Blair affiliates with Greeley and Giddings—Abolitionism like murder will out." Shouts of "Missouri Dick is our man" ended in pandemonium when Barret appeared to address the cheering, screaming mass of humanity. A barbecue was held at Barret's Station the next day. The *Republican* carried the glorious news to its excited subscribers that a monstrous Douglas meeting in Springfield, Illinois, July 25, had astonished Old Abraham and showed Illinois to be moving *en masse* for the "Little Giant."

The Union men caught some of the wild spirit of enthusiasm and feebly attempted to snatch the vote of St. Louis. They staged a grand parade on the night of July 28. Larger numbers took part in it than the Douglas men were willing to believe. Their procession was headed by a big wagon canopied with the American flag and drawn by six gaily caparisoned horses. Three large bells hung on the wagon made the chimes, and on banners was read the motto of "Death to Sectionalism."

At a Democratic rally in Palmyra, Missouri, Charles D. Drake predicted disunion unless Douglas were elected. He accused abolitionism of being the cause of all their troubles. The National Democracy, he said, had always stood firm against sectionalism; "every vote taken from that party now is a vote taken from the Union; . . . Close up the ranks," he pleaded, and "we shall know who are our friends and who are our foes." The Democracy with all its boasting worried more and more as the election approached. A Mr. Cabbel, and a Mr. Merrick of Chicago, were invited to speak in St. Louis for Douglas. The whole state ticket performed more or less. Each side resorted to bitter denunciation of the other. At the Bridgeton debate Blair struck hard at Barret. The *Republican* said he was "stung" by Barret and "mad again." On Saturday evening, July 28, the Republicans eclipsed all former demonstrations. The procession formed in front of the European Hotel on Chestnut Street and marched to Soulard Market. James Peckham, later to be the author of *General Nathaniel Lyon and Missouri in 1861,* marched at the head of the parade carrying a picture of "Old Abe." Then in order came sixteen Juveniles, twenty-three torches, four transparencies, six inscriptions, and the marchers. The platform was erected on rails. The outburst of enthusiasm and gymnastics of the concourse when Blair mounted the platform was a spectacle worthy of his admiration. In his speech that followed he reiterated that he was cheated out of his seat in the election of 1858. He then stated that he would work for a homestead bill and a protective tariff, if elected, and insisted that he was the workingman's friend.[61]

And then Carl Schurz came to speak for him. How the *Republican* hated Schurz! He sneers, it declared; he grimaces

[61] St. Louis *Republican,* July 24-29.

like Greeley's *Tribune;* he uses a "fuliginous wrapping of words and accessory ideas that envelop" ideas; he is the "big gun of the Republicans"; one of the "loudest sort." But after Schurz appeared, the *Anzeiger* advised all Germans to vote a straight Republican ticket.

The Democratic press fell to devoting a large portion of its space to Blair and his cohorts. Rumors and weird stories were seized upon with avidity. The aim of Black Republicanism, it declared, was "negro equality, and its conclusion social and moral anarchy." It charged the Republicans of Massachusetts with pouring money into Blair's coffers to buy votes at the rate of one for a day's wages. The Lincoln-Blair clubs were said to have imported three hundred policemen's bludgeons to be used about the polls. Strangers were said to be imported and furnished with bogus naturalization papers to enable them to vote for Blair. How could this dastardly Black Republican Blair be stopped? The answer was: "Stand by the ticket" with Douglas at its head. "The True Issue," ran a headline, is "Whether we shall be governed by a reign of negroarchy." [62]

It is very probable that Blair could have made but few speeches in defense of Republican principles had it not been for the Wide-Awakes. They were pitted against the "Douglas Clubs," the "Constitutional Guards," the "Broom Rangers," and various other organizations. Germans and Americans who were sympathetic with the Republican party became members of the Wide-Awakes. Headquarters were located in a room furnished gratis by August Loehner at the southeast corner of Seventh and Chestnut Streets. The Wide-Awakes often marched in procession to their places of "appointed gatherings." If the meetings were held at night, guards with lighted lamps on sticks were stationed to protect those who were speaking. Ruffians could thus be seen if they approached. The enemy seemed to delight in serenading the Wide-Awakes with cheers and yells quite discomfiting to those who would speak, or hear what was spoken. But by the use of burning camphene with which the Wide-Awakes besmeared the disturbers, and severe beatings with sticks, the meetings were permitted to continue. Although Blair could speak in St. Louis

[62] *Ibid.*, Aug. 1-6.

with reasonable security, he met with warmer receptions in the state. Three hundred Wide-Awakes had to go to Ironton to protect him when he spoke in that town.

While Blair was busily engaged in an attempt to defeat Barret and in molding public opinion as fast as he could, the Democrats out in the state were wrecking their ship on the rocks of dissension. For them early in the year conditions were such that the state nominating conventions portended serious troubles ahead. There were about six thousand Republicans in the state, a few Whigs, and the Democrats as a party split wide open when Claiborne F. Jackson called the first Democratic convention to order in Jefferson City in April, 1860. The Democrats in every county of the state were represented at that convention, and a large portion of the counties had full delegations. The leaders of the two factions, Douglas and Breckinridge, at once marshalled their forces for the inevitable contest to gain the controlling hand in the organization of the convention. Skirmishing and dilatory tactics were avoided; but the challenge of battle was thrown by one side and promptly accepted by the other. It was evident from the very first that neither faction would conciliate or purchase harmony through concession of any material points in the controversy.[63]

After adopting a strong pro-slavery platform, Claiborne F. Jackson was nominated on the fourth ballot for governor of Missouri. His popularity was a result of his early opposition to Benton. He had succeeded in keeping his ideas on secession to himself, and was, therefore, a suitable candidate for governor who had to be nominated under such conditions as existed in the convention. Senator Atchison had been a poor runner because he was one of the "fire-eaters." Any one who openly supported Bell or Douglas had no chance of nomination.

Jarring discord and riotous disorder characterized the sessions of the Democratic state convention. The minority yielded sullenly in the contests, but its forced acquiescence was ominous and left the victors far from confident of the outcome in the coming election.

The split in the National Democratic party made it difficult

[63] John F. Snyder, "Democrat State Convention in 1860," in *Missouri Historical Review*, II, 113.

for Claiborne F. Jackson, who tried to remain neutral during the campaign for governor. He was finally forced to announce himself in favor of the principles for which Douglas was fighting. "Southern" Democrats in Missouri immediately nominated Hancock Jackson, an avowed secessionist, for governor. No doubt Blair would have compromised with the Union men, but the Conservative Unionists ran Semple Orr, and the Republicans nominated James B. Gardenshire. Of the 156,579 votes cast in the election, C. F. Jackson, representative of the Douglas Democrats, received 74,446; Semple Orr received 66,583; Hancock Jackson, 11,416; and James B. Gardenshire, 6,135.[64] The Douglas Democrats won the election by fewer than 10,000 votes. But a further analysis based on the returns shows that the extreme Southern sympathizers were far in the minority. The Republicans were farther behind. Missouri had shown the states of the Union that she would not easily follow the radicals of either section. The state legislature did not indicate the same results as did the vote for governor. The Douglas Democrats and the Breckinridge adherents combined to control the legislature. The speaker of the House was a Breckinridge man.[65] Thomas C. Reynolds, a radical and extreme "fire-eater," was speaker for the senate by virtue of having been elected lieutenant-governor.

Blair carried his district by a plurality of 1,486 votes for the long term and lost the short term by a few votes. The news of his success was hailed by the Republican press as a great victory. The election of Blair and Rollins guaranteed to Missouri two doughty fighters for freedom. Doolittle wrote from Springfield, Illinois, where he was speaking for the Republicans, to his wife that: "The Telegraph brings good news from St. Louis Blair is elected."[66] Greeley wrote to Pike in Maine to "think of Frank Blair, and be ashamed of your doubts and quickened in your works."[67]

Against the wishes of Greeley and his party Blair resigned from his seat in Congress and turned his attention primarily to the national campaign. For nearly a month he busied himself

[64] *Tribune Almanac*, 1861, 55.
[65] Violette, *op. cit.*, 324; McElroy, 18; Lucien Carr, *Missouri A Bone of Contention* (Boston, 1888), 267.
[66] Doolittle MSS., Aug. 7, 1860.
[67] Pike, *First Blows*, 524.

with his disorganized financial affairs. Meanwhile he had time to reflect upon the recent state election. He decided that he was not obligated to the Bell-Everett group, nor to any other except the Republicans. Imagining that he could "pull from 30 to 35 thousand votes for Lincoln" in Missouri, he explained his situation to his brother thus: [68]

> Old Bates was absent & his friends did nothing to assist me— Gibson was also away & took no part, Judge Henderson & Sam Breckinridge did not vote at all—so I am under no obligations to those parties & I am glad of it. It obviates any necessity of me urging the appointment of Bates to the Cabinet & leaves us entirely free to use all our influence for the Maryland appointment [his brother Montgomery to the Cabinet], which is all that I now care for indeed all I ever cared for[!]

In a letter to the public [69] he declared that the election fixed the status of St. Louis as a Republican city. After producing a column of figures to prove that he was cheated out of the election of 1858, and again for the short term by the fusionists and frauds in 1860, he declared that:

> It is the battle of Lexington in our Republican revolution to be concluded by a surrender of Yorktown next November. In that final victory the Republicans of Missouri must participate, and bring their whole army into the field. Every Republican in this state should cast his vote for the principles of the American revolution, to be restored only by the elevation of Abraham Lincoln to the chair once occupied by Washington and Jefferson. The solid, faithful and inflexible phalanx of German Republicans to whom, as the most numerous and not the least enthusiastic, the first honors of our victory in St. Louis are due, will then be reinforced by the whole body of their countrymen in this state. The old guard of Benton democrats will renew the struggle with happier auspices, in which their glorious old leader expired, against the disunionists. . . .

He began his whirlwind campaign for Lincoln in September. On August 25 he announced that he would speak in a tier of counties stretching from the Mississippi River along the Missouri River to the western boundary of the state. This region was in the stronghold of the Democracy. It required a brave heart to

[68] Blair MSS., Aug. 15, 1860.
[69] New York *Semi-Weekly Evening Post,* Aug. 18, 1860.

face the excited crowds and speak for Black Republicanism in the Missouri Valley. He told the Republicans that they must overthrow the "corrupt dynasty," and help the South to maintain freedom of speech and the press.

His reception by the Democrats was anything but cordial or courteous. The Republicans were not numerous enough to control the vast crowds which poured out to hear him. He was not permitted to speak long in his calm, philosophical manner on national questions—homestead bill and railroads—before he was interrupted constantly with cries of "Hurrah for Bell and Everett," "Hurrah for Douglas," and "Hurrah for Breckinridge." More than once he was interrupted with eggs and stones hurled at him by men in his audiences. Sometimes hoots and yells broke up the meetings. Undaunted and unafraid he continued his campaign in his state until he was called eastward by the Republicans of the East who believed he could accomplish far more for his party in richer fields.

He first went into Illinois at Quincy and then worked his way eastward. After a consultation with Lincoln at Springfield, and his father and brother at Silver Spring, the Blairs went to consult with Simon Cameron, Preston King, and Carl Schurz, at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.[70] The state election in that state was to be held on October 13. It was highly important that it should be carried by the Republicans. They had not forgotten the election in 1856. L. E. Chittenden, a popular orator of the day, has left an interesting account of the tour which he and Blair made in the Keystone state at the request of the Republican Committee.[71]

They were a matched pair of speakers who were quite unpopular with the Democracy. They hit hard. Chittenden was capable of making "cracking" speeches; Blair was accused of being a demagogue by the St. Louis *Republican*. Tens of thousands rushed to the "speakings" to hear them. Chittenden relates that:[72]

The image of that fortnight upon my memory represents a continuous procession of committees of eminent citizens, mass-meetings,

[70] Bancroft, *Writings of Schurz*, I, 162.
[71] L. E. Chittenden, *Personal Reminiscences 1840-1890* (New York, 1893), 8-11.
[72] Chittenden, *op. cit.*

torch-light processions, Wide-awakes in uniform, shouting, singing political songs, and hurrahing for the ticket. In the afternoons Col. Blair and myself usually addressed the same mass-meeting. As soon as one had concluded he was hurried away to a distant town or city, to be in time for the evening meeting. The other made his speech, and was rushed off in the opposite direction. Some nights we were hundreds of miles apart, at noon the next day together. Such sleep as we got was on the cars. We were only permitted to see Republican newspapers, which declared that our converts were numerous, our missionary work a pronounced success. We never failed to make our connections, and, as agreed, were returned to the Girard House in Philadelphia, on Friday preceding the Monday of the state election. We were a used-up pair of campaigners. We had lost our voices; could not speak above a whisper, and in desperate need of the rest and sleep to which we intended to appropriate the next forty-eight hours.

But rest and sleep were not for us. Col. Blair was hurried off somewhere, and I did not see him again until the second year of the war.

On the evening of October 2, Blair spoke "to an immense concourse of persons in National Hall, Philadelphia." The Wide-Awake procession with bands, transparencies, and torch-lights made an impressive sight. He was thrilled to his fingertips with that glorious demonstration. In one of his best speeches he returned to his pet theme—slavery—when he said:[73]

Familiar from association with the mischief we seek to abate, permit me to say again that the standard of Republicanism must be advanced to embrace the whole creed of the fathers; that the policy of non-extension of slavery is only a part of the creed, and that we must embrace the whole to make it complete, and commend it to the people of the South. The result of confining slavery to its present bounds, as has been already stated, is that the increase of slaves will ultimately lead to an explosion and bloody issue, calamitous to all alike. And in the meantime the non-slaveholding white men, already deprived of the means to support themselves and families by the presence of slaves engrossing nearly all employments, will find themselves still more and more oppressed as the slaves multiply, and are substituted as laborers in the few employments still left to them.

The less spectacular Montgomery Blair delivered sledge-hammer blows on slavery while he spoke in Pennsylvania. His speeches were "impressive," but they were better as news print

[73] New York *Semi-Weekly Evening Post*, Oct. 6, 1860.

than oratory. He spoke in Philadelphia on October 3, before another "grand Republican demonstration" where he was greeted throughout his speech with applause. His Southern blood and his faith in Southern men led him to assert that there were plenty of Southerners who believed as he did on the subject of slavery. Slavery must be restricted to its Southern area, else it would ruin the markets on the Pacific. Free territory must be consecrated to freedom and freemen. Allow it to spread and it would blight the commercial life of any area as it had already done in some of the states in the South. If the Pennsylvanians, he said, would give the country four years of Republican rule, he would "guarantee that Maryland would be with them." [74]

The Blairs tried hard to arouse enthusiasm for Lincoln and Republican principles in Maryland. Open air meetings were held at different places in their home county and elsewhere. The three of them attended the meetings. Congressman Kilgore of Indiana aided them in their cause, but the influence of Douglas, Henry Winter Davis, and Yancy was too strong for them. Three-fourths of the people who attended the rallies were anti-Lincoln, and very naturally prevented the Blairs from arousing much enthusiasm for their ticket. The Democrats in Baltimore were so bitterly opposed to them that they, in a frenzy, tore an American flag to shreds when it was taken away from a group of Republicans.[75] At best they could hardly hope to poll more than ten thousand Republican votes. Montgomery felt the greatest responsibility for the success of his party in the state. He hoped to enter its politics, and he hoped above all things to keep it loyal, if the South should secede. At Iddin's store on October 13, he made one of his typical speeches. It was concise and logical, free from extraneous references, and sound in its doctrine. He told his friends who had gathered in considerable numbers that Breckinridge was a mere tool behind whom the radical Southerners were hiding. Yancy, he said, could not secure the vote of a single state in the South except South Carolina, but under cover of Breckinridge's personal character they might carry the whole South. Breckinridge was prudent and silent where Yancy was outspoken. He would permit Yancy and his conspirators to dis-

[74] *Ibid.* [75] Blair MSS. N. H. Pollock to M. Blair, Oct. 23.

rupt the Union because he loved the South better. Therefore every vote for Breckinridge was one for disunion. All three Democratic candidates stood practically on the same platform relative to the extension of slavery. They were the followers of "the Arch Nullifier, Calhoun" with whom the patriotic Benton, and Henry Clay, the colossal figure of his day, had clashed. The Republicans now stood where Clay and Benton stood on the subject of slavery—the territories must remain forever free. The government would submit itself to the tyranny of nine judges, if it accepted the principle that the Supreme Court could legally decide the question. The Court had no constitutional right to establish a general policy of government. Jefferson and Jackson would never have agreed to such a system. The people should remain sovereign. The danger to the Union existed in the attempts of conspirators to use a fire-brand doctrine to precipitate revolution before friends of the Union could resist their destructive usurpation. Leaders of all the factions of the Democracy had been telling the people that the Republicans were revolutionary, abolitionist in principle, and dangerous to slave property. He, as a matter of fact, had never heard any good reason why slavery should be extended. The Republican party opposed extension and proposed to let slavery be where it already existed. Was that revolutionary? The idea that slavery was a good and should be extended developed in Calhoun's and Polk's time, not in the days of Jefferson.

No citizen of the United States need fear that the Republicans would destroy slavery. False charges were built up on the unfortunate phrases of some of the members of the party, as for instance, *"the irrepressible conflict."* It should be remembered that "a law of the Federal Government abolishing Slavery in Maryland would be as void and nugatory as an Act of the British Parliament." The North showed by its action in 1850 that its opposition to the extension of slavery in our territories was free from any intention to affect slavery in the South. After fair consideration it must be accepted that there was nothing to fear from a Republican victory.[76]

Blair and his father expected little more than to perfect a

[76] A draft of this speech is in the Blair MSS.

Republican organization which they believed would function in 1864. Very few papers supported their cause. Manufacturers threatened to dismiss laborers who voted for "Old Abe." Their strongest opponent was Henry Winter Davis, who declared that Lincoln's principles were essentially little different from his own. He advised men not to excite passions and to settle the slavery question by being silent. He would keep things as they were.[77] The popular vote in the national election shows what an uphill fight the Blairs had in the state. Lincoln received 2,294 votes; Douglas 5,966; Breckinridge, 42,482; and Bell, 41,760. It is unnecessary to say that Montgomery Blair was defeated on the electoral ticket.

The Blair women helped the men in their campaign. Mrs. Montgomery Blair entertained their friends in her spacious and beautiful home at 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue. Prominent Republicans found her home a delightful place to discuss politics with the Blairs. Its cellars were filled with rare wines and good food. Its hospitality was hardly excelled by that at Silver Spring where the winsome Betty and her mother entertained Republican leaders at plantation dinners and dances. The wives of leading Washingtonians stopped at 1651 on the Avenue when they promenaded before the White House on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Those who lived on F and G Streets Northwest came down the Avenue quite regularly and passed the Blair mansion. Mrs. Jefferson Davis never failed to stop at the Blair's when she was in the city. She, with Mrs. Joe Johnston and Mrs. Clement Hill, sat with Mrs. Blair in her parlor and watched the passersby by the hour. Only Republican celebrities strong in the faith went to Silver Spring. There they held important consultations and secret meetings. And what a fine place it was for them! The estate was never more beautiful. The ingenuity of the elder Blair had made his dream of a paradise on this earth come true. Its myriad of flowers, its tall stately trees and its shrubbery, its greenhouses, orchards and gardens, and its long shady walks along the ravines made it a politician's paradise—and only seven miles from Washington City! Rich wines, food, servants, hospitality, and the ad-

[77] B. C. Steiner, *Life of Henry Winter Davis* (Baltimore, 1916), ch. 7.

vice of a sage! It is lamentable that no list of the names of distinguished visitors was kept at Silver Spring.

The campaign over the entire country was not so exciting as those of 1840 and 1856. There were obvious reasons for the difference. As the campaign progressed it became increasingly evident that Lincoln would be elected. The assurance of victory was less conducive to the use of revolutionary campaign methods than the hope of a crusading victory which prevailed in the election of 1856. It became a contest over principles in 1860, not one of personalities as it was in 1828, 1840, and 1856. In 1856, Frémont was accused of being guilty of every crime; in 1840, Harrison was called a coward and a dotard; but little of that was attached to Bell, Douglas, Lincoln, or Breckinridge. The extreme Southern papers belittled Lincoln, it is true, as for instance, the Charleston *Mercury* which pronounced him a "lank-sided Yankee of the uncomeliest visage, and of the dirtiest complexion." Moreover, the Democrats were too busy turning their campaign guns on each other to give their undivided attention to the Republicans. Furthermore, the Republicans had no official record to be attacked, but they could and did denounce the Democratic administration as corrupt and dangerous to liberty.

Some attempt was made by Jefferson Davis to unite the Democratic factions by the withdrawal of the three nominees. Douglas refused to bargain his chance at the presidency, claiming that he was the true representative of his party. He was a veteran campaigner, an obstinate, ambitious politician who refused to consider the moral element in politics. As Seward in his, Douglas was the most popular man in his party. And "his campaign tour of the country was the most sensational in the history of the country to that time. Practically every state, with the exception of several in the South, and practically every large city, outside of Charleston, South Carolina, heard him; for over two months he spoke continuously, sometimes delivering a score or more of speeches in a day." He was a "brilliant, eloquent rough-and-tumble fighter." The timid old John Bell got nowhere. The young and courageous Breckinridge needed mental balance and perspective. The attempt of the Bell and Breckinridge Democrats

in a few Northern states to set up fusion tickets and throw the election of a President into Congress proved to be in vain. Samuel J. Tilden, Fernando Wood, and John Van Buren were among the Fusionists—the "cheesy pillars and architrave of the Dry Goods party."[78] Lincoln remained at home and allowed his party press and orators to defend him and his principles.

Every politician, old and young, contributed to the campaign. Yancy, the "Seward of the South," invaded the North and eloquently defended slavery. He was accorded a respectful hearing in the large cities, even in Faneuil Hall in Boston. James S. Green traveled over East, West, and South for Breckinridge.[79] The obstinate and brilliant Henry Winter Davis, the scintillating James S. Rollins, and the firm, old, peace-loving John J. Crittenden pleaded the cause of the Union and the support of Bell and Everett. President Buchanan was derided by his audience when he made a speech in Washington, but he effectively struck off the official heads of many Douglas supporters. The Republicans drafted old and young speakers. They went into every hamlet in doubtful states. Among their veterans were the incomparable Tom Corwin, the redoubtable Ben Wade, the aspiring Governor Salmon P. Chase, the spiritually minded Senator Doolittle, the Democratic-Republican Bingham of Michigan, the fiery Cassius Clay, the liberty-loving Carl Schurz, and the radical, and most popular of all, William H. Seward. Dozens of others traveled up and down the land speaking for Republicanism. Young men like Whitelaw Reid and James G. Blaine did their part. Bates asked every Republican frankly to support Lincoln. Preston King remained at his post in Washington all summer and fall during which time he carried on a tremendous correspondence with Republicans scattered over the Union. He worked almost night and day. Gratz Brown, as Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee of Missouri, begged Republicans to vote their convictions with faith, firmness, and without passion. He said in an address to the Missouri Republicans on October 3: "Wherever you see a free citizen of our state, relying upon his own labor, farming

[78] New York *Semi-Weekly Evening Post,* Oct. 10, 1860.
[79] Snyder MSS. Green to Snyder, Oct. 3, 1860.

his own land, living by the industry of his own hands, point to that man and say, there is the Republican platform."

Seward created a profound impression on his party by his grand tour of nine states. He delivered speeches in nearly all of the important cities in the North. "Every speech was fresh, without repetition of former utterances, and far outclassed the ordinary stump speech in fervency of utterance, literary quality, elevation of thought, and great enthusiasm on the part of the auditors." [80] He pleased the West with his radicalism and clear enunciation of manifest destiny. The St. Louis *Democrat* expressed an unqualified admiration for his extraordinary fertility of thought.

Henry Wilson claims that Douglas in the early summer conceded the election to Lincoln.[81] The elections in the Southern states in August indicated only the embittered struggle between Bell and Breckinridge. The September elections in Maine and Vermont greatly encouraged the Republicans, and the October Republican victories in Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio, virtually decided the contest. The Democrats conceded the election to Lincoln. The New York *Evening Post* said in an editorial on October 13 that Lincoln could not now be defeated. It is said that Douglas remarked to his secretary: "Mr. Lincoln is the next President. We must try to save the Union. I will go South." John Greenleaf Whittier memorialized the victory with his song, "The Quakers are Out": [82]

> Not vainly we waited and counted the hours,
> The buds of our hope have burst out into flowers.
> No room for misgiving—no loop hole of doubt—
> We've heard from the Keystone! The Quakers are out!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Give the flags to the winds!—set the hills all aflame;
> Make way for the man with the patriarch's name;
> Away with misgiving—away with all doubt,
> For Lincoln goes in when the Quakers come out!

Only one interesting defection occurred in the Republican ranks. Eli Thayer upon invitation from some of his friends ac-

[80] Fite, *op. cit.*, 212.
[81] Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power*, II, 699-700.
[82] New York *Semi-Weekly Evening Post*, Oct. 20.

cepted an independent nomination for Congress after he had failed to receive it at the hands of his party. He asked Montgomery Blair what to do when he failed to get the nomination. The reply came at once:[88]

> . . . I hasten to say that my advice is emphatically against allowing yourself to be made an independent candidate. . . .
>
> . . . Now whilst I agree with you in thinking that a portion of your party are deficient in breadth of views in regard to policy, yet it must not be forgotten that the Republican party is the only party which purposes to be opposed to the extension and perpetuation of slavery, and therefore whether its measures of opposition to this Anti-Democratic system are always the wisest and best or not, it is the only organization with which a real Democrat can sympathize or cooperate.

Thayer disregarded Blair's advice, and his party press severely condemned him for his unfaithfulness. His defeat made him a lame duck in Congress in December of 1860.

The attention of the country was divided between the election and various other events. Considerable excitement was created by the visit of the Prince of Wales. America was flattered. The Garibaldi celebrations occupied the momentary attention of courteous Americans. Sam Houston drew the attention of the country when he refused to accept an independent nomination for the presidency and advised his friends to defeat sectionalism and stand by the Union. Disturbances in financial circles made business men nervous. Fluctuating stocks were not reassuring, especially the falling prices of Southern stocks. On the other hand the bountiful crops of grain throughout the Northwest gave an aspect of great prosperity to the North. Three million bushels of grain flowed into Chicago in one week during the threshing season. Rapid industrial expansion engaged the attention of capital and labor.

The election resulted in a Republican victory by a plurality vote. Lincoln received 1,857,610 popular votes, Douglas 1,365,967, Breckinridge 847,953, and Bell 590,631. The Fusionists carried only New Jersey.

Nearly every white man in Missouri went to the polls. The total vote for the state was 165,518. Douglas and Bell had the

[88] Blair MSS. M. Blair to Thayer, July 12, 1860.

closest race, Douglas defeating Bell by the small majority of 429 votes. Douglas polled 58,801; Bell, 58,372; Breckinridge, 31,317; and Lincoln, 17,028.[84] Out of every 165 men, 117, or nearly 5/7, were hostile to the views of the Southern secessionists and the Northern radicals. It is significant that the vote for Douglas and Bell had lost considerably, while Breckinridge had gained 19,902, and Lincoln's vote had increased from 6,135 to 17,028 during the short period intervening between the state and national elections. Radicalism was evidently gaining in Missouri. Blair, Smith, Brown, and Gardenshire were gaining ground for the Republican party and rolling up strength for the contest with Governor Jackson.

[84] *Tribune Almanac*, 1861, 55.

CHAPTER XXVII

Making a Cabinet

These are the times that try men's souls.—Thomas Paine.

"Pennsylvania 70,000 for you. New York safe. Glory enough." That was the telegram from Simon Cameron to Abraham Lincoln about midnight of November 6, 1860. Within twenty-four hours the full results of the election were known. Lincoln was President-elect.

The returns from the election made the fact obvious that he was President-elect not because of the split in the Democratic party. It was also obvious that the South had no reason to fear Republican interference with slavery where it existed, but there was to be an end to the extension of slavery into our territories. The Democrats of the South could have successfully and profitably reorganized their party and through the Democracy regained control of the government. Instead, they followed a maddened group of fire-eaters who were hell-bent for rule or ruin. They had threatened secession before the election. The legislature of South Carolina made good its threat by refusing to adjourn until after the election, and then by calling a convention to decide on secession. The convention unanimously adopted an ordinance on December 20 by which it declared and ordained the dissolution of the Union. She set herself up as an independent state with her own flag. Within six months six other cotton states took similar action. On February 4, 1861, delegates from the seceding states met at Montgomery, Alabama, where they organized the Southern Confederacy.

President-elect Lincoln was forced to stand helplessly by while the active Southerners with impunity made away with some of the prized possessions of the United States. Money, mints, forts,

munitions, boats, harbors, and what-not were seized by them. Patriotic unionists fretted and fumed at the timid policy of the shackled President yet in office. They demanded action to save the country while Buchanan prayed for the fourth of March to come. "I trust to Heaven," wrote Governor Andrews, "that none of the weak-kneed measures such as Thurlow Weed proposes, & which yr last note deprecates, will be adopted." [1] "I believe Mass. will never for one moment consent to any base bowing of the knee to the dark spirit of slavery. I am for forbearance—patience & for a decorous modesty on the part of the Republicans but I am for unflinching firmness in adhering to the freedom of the territories & all our principles. . . . If any of our Mass. or N. E. men are 'shaky' you must tell me at once."

On the other hand, high authorities appeared to encourage the wayward sisters to depart in peace. Buchanan was "lost in uncertainty, doubt, and hesitation." Disclaiming any belief in secession he told Congress that he had no power to coerce a state. He permitted disloyal officials to remain in his Cabinet and to paralyze the administration. What a contrast with Andrew Jackson! Horace Greeley, who Henry J. Raymond claimed had done more to secure the nomination of Lincoln than all of the Blairs, said no one state could leave the Union, but that if several contiguous states seceded, "we will do our best to help them out, not that we want them to go, but that we loathe the idea of compelling them to stay." [2] Senator Seward believed that the Union was natural and necessary, that disunion would destroy the greatness of our country, and that liberty would retrograde into military despotism if our Union were dissolved. But Jefferson Davis scared him into an attempt to soothe the South, as may be seen in his speech which he made when he stood upon the floor of the Senate and announced: [3]

> If others shall invoke that form of action to oppose and overthrow government, they shall not, so far as it depends on me, have the excuse that I obstinately left myself to be misunderstood. In such a case I can afford to meet prejudice with conciliation, exaction with concession which surrenders no principle, and violence with the right hand of peace.

[1] Blair MSS. Andrews to M. Blair, Boston, Dec. 4, 1860.
[2] Linn, *Greeley*, 185.
[3] Bancroft, *Seward*, II, 14.

He was compromised in the eyes of staunch unionists by his relationship with the sixty-three year old Weed. The latter spent his daily and nightly thoughts on how to avert disunion. His age had mellowed him, and so he urged that, "They who are conscious of least wrong can best afford to manifest a spirit of conciliation." He proposed in his Albany *Evening Journal* to restore the Missouri Compromise line, and the payment for rescued slaves by counties in which they were discovered. That was a bold proposal by a frank Republican.[4] Many of the Republican leaders, including the Blairs, attributed Weed's proposals to the influence of Seward, and when the latter made his plea for conciliation, they felt certain of his wavering loyalty. It was believed that he was playing for the vote of the South in 1864. The Blairs, consequently, soon became enemies of Seward.

There were many men who hardly knew what position to take. One of them was Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, a tried Republican, then in Congress, who wrote to his wife that if it were not for the bad example, he would like to see how the South could get along alone for a few years.[5] And to a Vermont Democrat he wrote on December 23, 1860, that, "Loving my country with my whole heart I should be glad to conciliate and preserve the Constitution and the Union." Horatio Seymour, of whom more is to be said, held to the pacific view that the cotton states should be permitted to secede, and to return at their own volition.[6]

Other men demanded immediate action to prevent secession. Among them was Governor Chase who wrote his sister, Mrs. Hunt of New Orleans, that, "If I were President I would, indeed, exhaust every expedient of forbearance, consistent with safety. But, at all hazards, and against all opposition, the laws of the Union should be enforced."[7] It made Senator Doolittle sick at heart to see Buchanan and the New York *Tribune* tell the South it might "go in peace." He believed the administration winked at treason. "O would to Heaven," he prayed, "there were 300 brave men" with Captain Anderson at Fort Moultrie. "The ship

[4] Rhodes, III, 144-45.
[5] W. B. Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill* (Boston, 1924), 121.
[6] Isaac Stephenson, *Recollections of a Long Life* (Chicago, 1915), 151.
[7] Warden, *Chase*, 366. Nov. 30, 1860.

of State is drifting towards the breakers," he lamented to Mrs. Doolittle. "The Captain in command is letting it float on with no attempt to save it except in humiliation and submission. O what a weak pusillanimous creature old Buchanan is! O how I blush for [my] Country in the face of the civilized world! Cowed by traitors playing into the hands of traitors, treating with rebels with arms in their hands." [8] Douglas faced the dangers of an excited South when he told them in their own cities that they had no right to secede. The St. Louis *Republican,* having fought Blair a hard fight in the election, begged Missouri to remain in the Union and demanded that no one accept either Yancy, Wise, or Slidell as authorities for the Slave States. Montgomery Blair wanted all governmental property seized, forts and harbors fortified and supplied with munitions, and the dismissal of disloyal Southerners in Washington.

It has been often charged that the Southern blood which flowed in the veins of the Blairs caused them to be conservative and sympathetic with the South. They were Kentuckians. The elder Blair owned slaves at the outbreak of the Civil War. Many of their kinsmen joined the Confederacy. It is worth mentioning that they were always Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Democrats, and that during the time of their affiliation with the Republican party they spoke and wrote of themselves as true Democrats. Parties changed their names and principles, but the Blairs lived as they firmly believed Jefferson and Jackson would have had them live. It is unjust to them to say their friends were mainly of the South. They had been absent from Kentucky for three decades. Politicians and politics had changed greatly in that time. As a matter of fact their intimate friends were mostly Northerners. Van Buren and Preston King were from New York; Broderick from California; Rollins, Benton, Broadhead, Gantt, Glover, and Gratz Brown from Missouri; Doolittle from Wisconsin, and Governor Andrews from Massachusetts. One author says in his reminiscences that Montgomery had, next to his father, more regard, admiration and veneration for old Ben Wade than any other living man.[9] The elder Blair had more love and admiration for

[8] Doolittle MSS. Dec. 9, 1860.
[9] A. G. Riddle, *Recollections of War Times 1860-1865* (New York, 1895), 22.

Crittenden, a Unionist, than any other living friend. They had been schoolboys and playmates together. Articles which were written by the Blairs for the newspapers and their manuscript letters prove them to have been more Northern in sentiment than Southern. To them Buchanan appeared to be a vacillating, pusillanimous old man who played with treason.

Public opinion was in a chaotic state between November 6, 1860, and March 4, 1861. While Buchanan sat supinely by, Congress attempted to reach a reconciliation. A committee of thirteen able men was appointed by the Senate to find a solution to the "irrepressible conflict." The elder Blair importuned Crittenden, whom he believed to be the heir of Henry Clay as a pacificator, to save the Union by some kind of an acceptable compromise. Crittenden proposed a scheme of compromise which consisted of unamendable amendments to the Constitution and some resolutions. He would have revived the Missouri Compromise line, guaranteed the payment of escaped slaves, protected slavery where it existed legally, sanctioned domestic slave trade, faithfully executed the Fugitive Slave Act, repealed the Personal Liberty Acts, and enforced the laws against the African slave trade. There was hope in the financial and commercial circles throughout the North that this compromise would be accepted. But the Committee failed to agree. Davis and Seward voted against the reëstablishment of the Missouri Compromise line. Lincoln wrote to Congressman William Kellogg on December 11, 1860, to "Entertain no proposition for a compromise in regard to the *extension* of slavery— The instant you do, they have us under again; all our labor is lost, and sooner or later must be done over— Douglas is said to be again trying to ring in his 'Pop. Sov.' Have none of it. The tug has to come and better now than later." [10] The Republican Congressmen thus sustained by Lincoln voted consistently against the compromise. A House committee of thirty-three also failed to agree on a general plan, except to propose an amendment to the Constitution to guarantee the inviolability of slavery in the states where it existed.

The South continued to perfect its organization. Major Anderson spiked his guns in Fort Moultrie and moved into Fort Sum-

[10] William K. Bixby MSS., in the Library of the Missouri Historical Society.

ter. Commissioners from South Carolina went to Washington to treat for the apportionment of the public debt and the return of Anderson to Fort Moultrie. Buchanan was apparently on the point of yielding when Jeremiah Black, successor to Cass as Secretary of State, assumed control, and forced Buchanan to uphold Major Anderson. A late reorganization of the Cabinet without the three rebels, Cobb, Floyd, and Thompson, gave a little hope to the impatient Republicans. Fortunately, Edwin M. Stanton was made Attorney-General.

Meantime Lincoln decided on his appointments for his Cabinet. Choosing his men was a difficult task for him because of his limited acquaintance with great men of the day, the youthfulness of his composite party, his campaign obligations which were made for him, and the state of the Union. He summoned many men to Springfield to consult them. He decided as early as December 8 to offer the post of Secretary of State to Seward. After a delay of three weeks the latter decided with distrust that it was his duty to accept the appointment. His offer of the position as Secretary of the Treasury to Chase was made on January 3, but was not accepted until some time in March. Before the winter was well advanced, Bates, the Blairs, Weed, Wilmot, Greeley, Trumbull, Oglesby, Gratz Brown, Oliver P. Morton, Judd, Schurz, and many others had appeared in Springfield to advise, to be consulted, or to seek offices for themselves or their friends, or both. Some of them went several times. Deputations from the border states put in their claims. Lincoln was literally besieged with applicants for offices. The hotels in Springfield swarmed with them. The Republicans expected and demanded a clean sweep. They resorted to tricks, intrigues, and maneuvers to get offices.[11]

The Blairs were expectant. Their strong influence in their party entitled them to an important appointment. The importance of the border states in the critical relations between the North and South demanded recognition. Frank wanted to be Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1861-62. He believed that he would become a formidable candidate for that position if Montgomery Blair, Bates, and Judd got into the Cabinet.[12] He

[11] Villard, *Memoirs*, 146-47.
[12] Blair MSS. F. P. Blair, Jr., to F. B. Blair, Sr., Dec. 23, 1860.

asked his father to go to see Lincoln in behalf of Montgomery. Lyman Trumbull and other admirers of the Blairs urged the appointment of one of them. On December 24, Lincoln wrote to Trumbull that he expected to offer Montgomery a place in his Cabinet, but that he could not be committed on the matter to any extent whatever.[13]

Strong opposition to the appointment of Montgomery Blair to a position in the Cabinet developed during the winter. The Blairs, like any influential family in politics, had many bitter enemies. Each state deputation wanted its own favorite appointed, and obviously there were not enough plums for all. David Davis thought his cousin, Henry Winter Davis, should be appointed.[14] Thurlow Weed and the New York *World* insisted on the appointment of Davis at the expense of Blair. Feeling the uncertainty of his appointment, Blair asked the Honorable Henry L. Dawes on February 9, 1861, to interview Congressmen who might urge the appointment of his brother, Frank, as Secretary of War.[15] Dawes had recently signed a petition for the appointment of Cassius Clay to that post, but the activities of the latter in the proposals for compromise and the mention of Frank's name for the post caused him to have his name erased. Dawes wrote that Tappan, who was carrying the petition for Clay, was disgusted with himself when he discovered that Frank was favorably mentioned for Secretary of War. Tappan, Dawes, and several of their colleagues considered him "admirably fitted" for the place.

Frank Blair and his father went to interview Lincoln. Probably no living man had more political experience than the aged Blair. Lincoln respected him, begged his advice, and became his intimate friend. Lincoln's acquaintance with Frank had caused him to admire him, and he had great respect for Montgomery's unflinching adherence to his anti-slavery principles. He knew that he dared not eliminate the Blair family and thereby lose their patronage in the border states. The turn of events in Missouri and Maryland appeared to indicate that the Blairs would have to save them for the Union.

[13] G. A. Tracy, *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln* (Boston, 1917), 193; Blair MSS. Gilt to F. P. Blair, Jr., Jan. 26, 1861.

[14] H. C. Whitney, *Lincoln The President* (New York, 1908), 15.

[15] Blair MSS. M. Blair to Dawes.



PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S CABINET, 1862

Lincoln was certain he wanted Seward, Chase, and Bates in his Cabinet. The appointment of Caleb Smith as Secretary of the Interior, and Simon Cameron as Secretary of War satisfied the key states. It eliminated the chance of Frank Blair. A reserved seat for New England was tendered to Gideon Welles as Secretary of the Navy after the President-elect reached Washington. That left the Postmaster-Generalship for a Marylander or a Southerner.

Thurlow Weed says Lincoln called him in to confer about the Postmastership. He wanted to know if Weed knew any one upon whom he could rely in the Southern States which were likely to secede. Weed mentioned four men among whom was Henry Winter Davis. Lincoln gave a dissenting opinion as to the advisability of selecting any of them and suggested Judge Blair, saying that he had been suggested, too. "What Judge Blair?," asked Weed. "Judge Montgomery Blair," replied the President-elect. "Has he been suggested by any one except his father, Francis P. Blair, Sr.?", returned Weed. "Your question," said Lincoln, "reminds me of a story," and then he told Weed a humorous story. Weed persisted that he would "strike out" the name of Blair and substitute Davis. Laughing dryly, Lincoln told Weed that Davis had been posting him up on the question. It was his opinion that Henry Winter Davis came from Maryland and had "Davis on the brain." "Maryland must, I think, be like New Hampshire, a good state to move from." Weed was chagrined to see that Blair was destined for a place. How and why, he could never find out.[16] But Henry Winter Davis was a rising young statesman, one who could not be altogether ignored. He was a Marylander who had never forgiven Montgomery Blair for bolting the American party (1857) in his own state. He had friends who were insistent; they disliked the subtle influence of the Blairs; and were certainly undisposed to see Montgomery Blair enter the Cabinet. The quarrel became bitter and the President-elect decided to announce Blair's appointment.

The Blairs persuaded Clay, whom Lincoln had appointed minister to Spain, to change to Russia in order to provide a first-class mission for Schurz. The latter was *persona non grata* in most

[16] Harriet A. Weed, *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), 607.

European courts. Clay complaisantly made the exchange and went to Russia. Schurz was appointed minister to Spain, but he resigned in December, 1861. Judd was sent as minister to Prussia, and Henry Winter Davis remained in Congress to be a thorn in the side of the Blairs. The political interests of the Blairs and Seward were so divergent that they were at cross purposes before the new administration was a month old.

The confidence of the President in the Blairs was shown by his submission of his inaugural address to Blair, senior, whose criticism he desired. Two other men, including the Secretary of State, were asked for their criticisms. The address was a masterpiece in literature and statesmanship. It was a plea for the Union, the kind of a document that the three Blairs could heartily endorse.

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